





YOUNG

CONVERTS



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# YOUNG CONVERTS;

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## BEGINNERS IN ZION'S WAYS.

BY ROBERT BOYD, D.D.

Author of "THE WORLD'S HOPE," "GRACE AND TRUTH," "FOOD  
FOR LAMBS," etc., etc.


Given by  
Thomas W. Goodspeed

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*"Be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of  
the Lord."*

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J. W. GOODSPEED,  
CHICAGO AND NEW YORK.



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## I.

### A GOOD BEGINNING.

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TAKE it for granted that my reader is really a converted soul. That, casting from you all other dependence, you now rest peacefully upon the atoning work of Christ, and that your faith in him was wrought by love, and has purified your heart. I ask not *how* this great change has been brought about, nor what has been the direct agency that the holy Spirit has blessed to bring you to Jesus. Whether you have passed through a long process of convictions, of alternate fears and hopes; or whether, like most of the conversions mentioned in the New Testament, you were sud-

denly brought to submit yourself to Christ's method of salvation, is now of no great consequence. You are now *in* Christ, and that is the really vital point. The great matter upon which two eternities turn—upon which life and death, heaven and hell depend—your personal faith in Christ, is now settled, and well settled; and I thank God on your behalf.

Dear reader, I congratulate you on the high honor, the lofty distinction, to which the mighty grace of God has lifted you. The greatest gift that God can bestow upon a creature is himself. You are now an heir of God. You are able to say with holy boldness, "The Beloved is mine, and I am His." The Apostle John said to the converts of his day, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God;" and we may rest assured that the unchanging Saviour has not abridged the honors and privileges of his people since that time. Once in Christ by a living faith, and the whole fulness of God is yours. Your feelings and frames are nothing; ceremonies, and notions, and creeds, and ordinances, and formal participation in worship, are all nothing

without Christ; but with trust in him, there is not any height of glory and honor in the whole universe to which a creature can attain, to which you may not ascend. If you have faith in Jesus, then you are a new creature; if a new creature, then you are a son of God; if a son of God, then you are "an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ." Thus united to Jesus, your inheritance is sure, for he is now in full possession of it.

You see, then, what a great thing it is to be a Christian. Indeed it will take all eternity to unfold to us the greatness of the privilege; and at present we can only wander around the edge of the boundless subject and exclaim, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." As Rowland Hill once said, when striving to illustrate God's love to his people, "I am unable to reach the lofty theme! yet I do not think that the smallest fish that swims in the boundless ocean ever complains of the immeasurable vastness of the deep. So it is with me: I can plunge, with my puny capacity, into a subject, the immensity of which I shall never be

able fully to comprehend!" For a child of wrath, a slave of Satan, a condemned criminal, an heir of hell, to be raised to a height of privilege and glory to which even angels do not attain, is most wonderful to the thoughtful mind! And that you, who, but a few days ago, were full of enmity against God, your heart set in you to do evil, your footsteps hastening down the broad road to destruction, should now be what you are, and where you are, is a miracle of grace. No wonder that the happy angels rejoiced over you in the happy hour of your espousals to Christ. No wonder that the friends who had so long prayed and longed for your conversion, rejoiced over you with such a solemn gladness. And no wonder that you yourself rejoiced, "with a joy unspeakable and full of glory."

And now that you are a Christian, it becomes a most important question, *What kind* of a Christian are you going to be? Are you going to be one modeled after men's opinions, or after the Bible standard? Men have a way of turning aside the

point of Divine truth on this subject from their consciences, by saying, Christians *ought* to do so and so; but the Word of God does not speak in this way. It does not say that Christians *ought* to be the light of the world, but that they *are* so. It does not say that they *ought* to be holy, but that they *are* possessed of that character. It is not merely that they *ought* to be bold and faithful witnesses for Christ in this dark and sinful world, but that they really *are* so testifying. That is a solemn passage, "For other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." (1 Cor. iii. 11-13). Here is a good foundation, a most precious foundation, the best that even God could lay, firm and secure as his eternal throne—but what are you going to build upon it? Shall it be the wood, hay, and stubble of worldly-minded-

ness, carnal affections, vile tempers, and low, narrow, selfish views? Or shall it be the gold, or silver, and precious stones of holiness, self-denial, heavenly affections and earnest love to God and man, showing itself in works of faith and in labors of love? Depend upon it that day by day, and little by little, you are building up some kind of character, and it becomes you to see well to it, that it is such as will honor the glorious foundation, and such as the fires of judgment will not have to burn up.

The temple of a holy life, built upon the foundation laid in Zion, greatly honors God, and commands the admiration of even bad men. The following fact, related by one familiar with all the circumstances, will illustrate this: "In one of the older States resided an infidel, the owner of a saw-mill, situated by the side of the highway over which a large portion of a Christian congregation passed every Sabbath to and from the church. This infidel, having no regard for the Sabbath, was as busy, and his mill was as noisy on that holy day as

any other. Before long, it was observed, however, that a certain time before service the mill would stop, remain silent, and appear to be deserted for a few moments, when its noise and clatter would re-commence, and continue till about the close of the service, when for a short time it again ceased. It was soon noticed that one of the deacons of the church passed the mill to the place of worship during the silent interval, and so punctual was he to the hour that the infidel knew when to stop the mill, so that it should be silent when the deacon was passing, although he paid no regard to the passing of others. On being asked why he paid this mark of respect to the deacon, he replied, "The deacon professes just what the rest of you do ; but he *lives*, also, such a life, that it makes me feel bad *here* (putting his hand upon his heart) to run my mill while he is passing."

Now, it is undeniable that there are large numbers, who, after their professed conversation, drop out of sight, and you would never know that they were Christians, unless they told you so, or you



found their names upon the church book. It is true every Christian cannot occupy a prominent and commanding position in the work of Christ's kingdom, but every one can be a *worker* for Jesus, and can boldly unfurl his colors, and let it be known whose side he is on.

A minister was once asked to make a speech at the anniversary of one of our great benevolent societies. When he got upon the platform he looked around for the friend who invited him, supposing him to be the president of the society. At length he saw him in an obscure corner of the crowded house, and when the meeting was over he came forth with a glad countenance, thanking one and another for their efforts, and expressing great delight at the prosperity of the cause.

"But," said the speaker referred to, "I thought you were the president of the society?"

"O, no, I am not," he replied, with great modesty.

"Then, you are one of the vice-presidents, surely?" said the speaker.

"No, I am not."

"Are you the secretary then, or the treasurer?"

"No, neither of these."

"Then, what are you? What office do you fill in the board?"

"None, sir; I have no office, and never had, unless, if you choose, you may call me the pack-horse of the enterprise!"

What a rebuke was the conduct of this noble man to those who will do nothing, unless they can do some great thing; who will take no position, unless they can take some great and commanding position! They must be made prominent workers, centering in themselves the attention of all, or they will do no work at all. This good man cared not what post of duty he was appointed to, nor how humble that work assigned him; he did it heartily as unto the Lord and not unto man. Resolve in your heart that you will be a *laborer*, not a *loiterer*, in the Lord's vineyard; that whether your life is to be a long one, or very short, as men use the term, it shall be filled with Christian activ-

ity. A life is not to be numbered by years, but by what a man has done for God. McCheyne, Summerfield, Nott, and Dudley Tyng, all died young, and yet they were old in fruits unto holiness—their life's work done and well done. Let yours, like theirs, be a life in earnest, a life that shows, not religion as *something* among other things, but as absolutely *everything*. Let yours be a consecrated life; soul, body and spirit—your time, talents, and property, all wholly dedicated to God.

Let me warn you of one thing—as you have begun by finding peace in Christ, continue to seek it there. Many young converts make great mistakes here. At first, their feelings and affections have been warm and gushing. In the fire and fervency of their first love they feel as if they could sing all the day long; and when these glowing feelings, from whatever cause, begin to decline, they sink into despondency, and feel as if they had lost their religion. But religion is a thing of principle, not of mere feeling. Your religion does not consist of your feelings; it consists of your faith in


Jesus, and your readiness to be governed in all things by his will. Frames and feelings change with the state of our health, the state of the weather, the circumstances in which we are placed, and through a great variety of moral and physical causes ; but Jesus Christ changes never. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

We have known some who never thought they had any enjoyment of religion, unless they were in the midst of a high excitement. The meeting that did not melt them into tears, or lift them up to the heights of ecstatic rapture, was not a good meeting. The calm statement of Divine truth, the earnest study of the Bible to know the will of God, the prayerfulness and the self-examination of the closet, all seem to them dull and uninteresting. They are like a habitual reader of exciting and sensational novels ; they have no relish for what is solid and instructive. My dear reader, avoid this at the very beginning of your Christian career, and let Jesus alone, who is the Author, be the Finisher of your faith.

## II.

### MAKING A PUBLIC PROFESSION.

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 HERE is not a nobler sight in the world than to see a man commit himself unreservedly to the best of causes—the cause of Christ; determined to stand by it at all hazards; to live for it, to work for it, to suffer for it, and, if need be, to die for it; but never to forsake it. Such a sight is morally sublime, and challenges the admiration of all who are capable of appreciating moral beauty. Said David, “I will pay my vows unto the Lord *now*, in the presence of all his people.”

Soon as a soul is converted, it becomes an imperative duty to make a public profession of attach-

ment to the Lord Jesus. Some churches are in the habit of keeping young converts back for a time, to prove their sincerity and their firmness. As a pastor, I have formerly, to some extent, encouraged this practice, in some cases; and I am now sorry for it. It has not a shadow of support in the Word of God. When Christ sent forth his disciples clothed with his high commission to preach the Gospel, and to establish churches, the promised Spirit accompanied the word spoken by them, and in some cases thousands were converted, and on the same day, often in the same hour, were baptized and added to the church. To put a tender little lamb out on a snow-bank exposed to the bleak winds, to see whether it will live, is entirely a modern invention. The primitive churches were never guilty of such folly. They required a profession of conversion, of repentance towards God, and of faith in the Lord Jesus; and where this was given and there was nothing in the life of the candidate to contradict the profession, they were at once baptized and added to the church. It is true they

were sometimes deceived, and admitted unworthy persons, just as churches are deceived now; but that belongs to the imperfection of human nature, and is an evil that no amount of delay in the reception of members will either mitigate or prevent. It is your duty as a Christian at once to offer yourself to the Church of Christ, and if they throw any delay in your way, the responsibility is theirs, not yours.

But you may say, "Can I not be as good a Christian without belonging to a church as with it?" To this I can give a most decided answer in the negative. No; you cannot. Indeed the question itself is absurd. It is equivalent to asking, "Cannot I be as good a Christian without obeying Christ as with it?" Christ established his church upon earth. He purchased her with his own blood. He laid the foundation upon which she is built with his own bleeding hands. He has appointed her ordinances and her government; established her officers, and given them their gifts and qualifications for her special edification. He has watched

over her in all ages, and has pledged his princely word that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against her;" and now, do you think that it can be agreeable to the Saviour's will to see his church neglected by his professed followers? No. To live out of the Church of Christ is to live in sin, in constant disobedience, and this must bring condemnation and darkness upon the mind. The church is the Christian's home, while upon earth. There he is supported and comforted, and fitted for the society of the just made perfect the church of the first-born, written in Heaven. Though the church here is perfect in her Great Head, she is not perfect in her members. They have their imperfections, and evil tempers; jangling and contention sometimes mar her holy beauty; but her most pious members can say, "Oh! Zion, with all thy faults I love thee still!"

"Beyond my highest joy,  
I prize her heavenly ways;  
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,  
Her hymns of love and praise."



“For her my tears shall fall ;  
For her my prayers ascend ;  
To her my cares and toils be given,  
Till toils and cares shall end.”

For those who try to be Christians without joining the church, there is another consideration worthy of attention. If it is right for you to remain out of the church, it is right for another to do it; and if it is right for two to do it, it would be right for two thousand, or for all Christians to do it. Thus, on the principle mentioned, there would be no churches, no places of worship, no ministers of the Gospel, no bond of union to bind Christians together, no organization by which the body of the faithful could work together for the overthrow of evil, and the establishment of good in the world. Would this be a desirable state of things? You feel that it would not, and yet as far as your influence goes on this point it leads to just such results. Our Lord says, “He that is not with me is against me,” and the same is true concerning his church. If you are not with it, you are counted

against it, at least to a certain extent. The world will point to you as one who has something against the church, or else you would have cast in your lot with her; and the better your character and reputation, the greater damage your standing aloof will do. The scoffers will say that you are too good a man to have anything to do with such people. They will count you on their side.

But there are some young converts who are kept back by conscientious, though mistaken views, in regard to themselves. One says, "I feel utterly unworthy to belong to Christ's Church." Now, this self-distrust is a good thing when kept in its proper place. True faith in Jesus always has connected with it self-distrust, for before we can depend entirely on him, we must be emptied of self. It has been compared to a young tree; the trunk goes upward from the little seed, and the root goes downward from the same seed; growing and springing in different directions from the same source. So from the same seed of faith in Christ, springs upwards confidence toward God, and

downwards distrust in ourselves. But if this distrust is used to lead us to neglect Christ's plain commands, it is prostituted to a bad object. It is turning the grace of God into sin. Christ does not ask you to make a public profession of your faith because you are worthy. It was not because you were worthy that he pardoned your sins, and shed his love abroad in your heart; and he asks you now to show your love to him by keeping his commands, and doing those things that will be pleasing in his sight from a principle of right.

There are others who say, "I am afraid to make a public profession, lest I should fall away and dishonor it." This sounds very humble, but it really springs from pride of heart. It goes upon the principle that you are to be your own support and to stand without Divine support. Did God make you a Christian, or did you make yourself one? And if he made you a Christian, do you not think that he is able to keep you one? "O, thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?" He who gives the strength to do one duty, can support

in the discharge of another. Go on, boldly, and in the path of right you have nothing to fear. The Master you serve will surround you with invisible armor, so that none can do you hurt. The promises of God will stand up around you like the mountains around Jerusalem.

This reminds me of an incident which occurred on board a British ship at the battle of the Nile. The narrator says: "There was but one Bible among seven hundred men. This was owned by a pious sailor, who did not forget to let its light shine before men. He read it over to others, and at length, by its means, a little praying circle was formed, numbering thirteen in all. Just before the engagement they all met, and commended themselves to God in prayer, expecting never again to meet in this world. Their ship was in the thickest of the storm, and all around their comrades fell, never to rise again. At one gun, where two of the number were stationed, three other soldiers were killed by one ball, but there they stood firm to their posts, clad in an armor invisible to mortal

eyes, but more impregnable than steel. When the battle was over, those who were left had agreed to meet if possible. What was their joy to find the whole thirteen assembled, not one of them even wounded. What a thanksgiving meeting that must have been !”

Now, my dear reader, the same God who preserved those men from physical danger, can keep you from all moral danger: so that in the severest temptations, when the fiery darts of the enemy fall thick around you, the Divine shield will defend you, and you will stand “steadfast and immovable.”

Sometimes persons are kept back from making a public profession of their faith by the fear of man. They fear the displeasure of their ungodly relations, or the sneers of their former companions, or friends. They dread, too, to appear before the great congregation and testify to what Christ has done for their souls. This is very unworthy of those for whose salvation the blessed Saviour “endured the Cross and despised the shame.” That

gracious friend tells us, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily." We must often sacrifice the less that we may enjoy the greater. We must often pass by the favor of men and the smiles of the world, in order that we may have the favor of God, and the happiness of a good conscience. These are the plain and searching principles that Jesus lays down, and we can see that they are highly reasonable and proper. If any are disposed to shrink back from them, it must be because they prefer the favor of men to that of God, or because they are ashamed of the Lord Jesus. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels."

You must come out from this halting, hesitating, compromising spirit, or you can never be a happy and a useful Christian. Your mind will be tossed to and fro by conflicting influences, and you will grope about, wrapped up in a dark and gloomy

haze of doubt and of uncertainty. Suppose, when Paul was converted that he had tried to keep it all to himself in order to avoid persecution, what would his religion have amounted to? Or if Luther, when he discovered in his Bible the doctrine of justification by faith, had kept it all in his own heart, and in his cell, lest he should get involved in some trouble, would God ever have honored him as he did? No; the principle that God acts on in such matters is, "Them that honor me, I will honor."

Perhaps my reader has some difficulty about the denomination of Christians with which to identify himself. This is a matter of importance, and demands the prayerful and careful study of the Word of God. You should not join a church because your friends and companions are going to join it, or have already done so. It is no good reason for joining a church that you think you would *feel more at home* there. It should not be a matter of mere feeling, but of intelligent principle, what church you shall join. The Bible is the only stand-

ard of appeal in all matters of faith and practice ; and after an honest and faithful examination of that holy book, you should join that body of Christians which you conscientiously believe to be nearest to that Divine rule.

I believe that the church to which I belong comes nearer to the faith and practice of the church established by Christ and his Apostles than any other that I know of. If I did not so believe, it would be my duty to leave it. If I knew of any other nearer to the Bible, it would be my duty to join it. Every intelligent and conscientious Christian, it is to be presumed, acts on the same principle. A sham liberality would no doubt call this bigotry ; but those who have learned to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," are not easily frightened by big-swalling words of vanity. On this matter let the Word of God be your only guide.

But though I do not feel at liberty to counsel you as to your denominational relations, I do most earnestly entreat you to place yourself under a



faithful and evangelical ministry. Attend the ministry of no man who does not preach Christ, in the fullest sense of the word. Christ may be in his creed, but if he is not in his sermons your soul will starve under him. Mr. Spurgeon tells us that when he was awakened, he wandered from church to church to find out how he could be saved, but could not hear the Gospel. One minister preached the experience of the people of God, and he felt that he had nothing to do with that; and another told him of the blessedness of the regenerated, and he felt that that did not apply to him; on one Sabbath the text would be "Be not deceived, God is not mocked;" and again, "The wages of sin is death." He tells us that he became worse and worse after hearing discourses that nearly drove him to despair; and then would come the text for good people, but not a word for him.

At last he went to hear a very humble preacher, but his text was, "Look unto me and be saved all ye ends of the earth." That was what he wanted to hear. He felt that it was intended for him.

"Look, look," said the preacher, "to Jesus, and you shall be saved this moment, you shall be lightened of your burden." Spurgeon tells us that he did, then and there, look to Jesus by faith, and he felt as if he could have sprung into the air, for his burden of sin was gone.

A minister may preach ably and eloquently; he may be a good man, and preach a great deal of valuable truth; he may even preach a great deal *about* Christ, and yet not preach Christ in the scripture sense of the term. Place yourself under the instruction of one who will delight frequently to lead you around the cross.

"Oppressed with noon-day's scorching heat,  
To yonder cross I flee;  
Beneath its shelter take my seat;  
No shade like this for me!

"Beneath that cross clear waters burst,  
A fountain sparkling free;  
And there I quench my desert thirst;  
No spring like this for me!

"For burdened ones a resting-place,  
Beside that cross I see;  
Hear I cast off my wretchedness;  
No rest like this for me!"

### III.

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

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MUCH is said in the present day about human progress. In praise of it, poetry and eloquence have taken their loftiest flights. Ours has so often been called a progressive age, and we have so often been called a progressive people, that with all our vanity we are beginning to tire of the endless repetition. Progress is doubtless a good thing, if it only be of the right kind. Many suppose that by repudiating what is *old*, and eagerly adopting what is *new*, they are making progress. Change, however, is one thing, and true progress is another. All true progress, such as is pleasing to God, must come from within, not from

without. The eagle might have wings tied upon it, but it could never make any progress with them ; it must have wings that grow up out of its own body with which to soar up out of its favorite peak on the sky-piercing mountain. All true human progress must begin in the heart, and it must be put there by His hand who plants the glorious galaxy of stars upon the dark brow of night.

We all know that the body, under the influence of proper food, air, and exercise, is capable of growth in strength, and in the development of all its powers. The same law of growth holds good in regard to the deathless soul. That was a remarkable wish of the Apostle John for his beloved friend Gaius : "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper, and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." Alas ! if the measure of our physical health were to be regulated by the health of the soul, what a nation of invalids we would be. How many there are who are sensitively alive to the wants of their bodies, but utterly neglectful of the immortal part lodged within ! Many a large,

sturdy, vigorous body, covers a poor, weak, sickly, starved soul; so that the disproportion between the soul and its outward covering, is as great as would be a very small boy clothed in his father's garments.

There can be no growth without life. Dead things do not grow, but decay. You might ornament a dead tree to any extent; you might paint and varnish over the dead, rotten trunk; but unless you could put life there, there could be no growth. Nay, in spite of all your ornamenting, the process of decay would go on; and one dead limb after another would fall down, fit only for the fire. And so there can be no spiritual growth unless we are connected with Jesus by a living faith. He says, "I am the life." The branch to get life and strength from the vine, must be in the vine, not merely *near* it. It might be tied against the vine, but it would get no strength, and bear no fruit, but hang there an unsightly object, rustling in the winds of heaven. Thus a man may be connected with a church by an outward profession, and may

remain so connected for many years ; but if there is not a union with Christ there can be no spiritual growth, and no bringing forth of fruit unto holiness.

The Ottawa river, in Canada, at certain seasons of the year, rises to a great height, and then suddenly falls again, leaving logs on the high banks, and dead branches and other rubbish hanging in the tops of the trees. There they lie, useless things, rotting in the sun and the rain that are making other things grow. I have often looked sadly upon them, and thought how like those Christless professors, who in some wild flood of excitement have been swept into the church, and when the excitement has gone down, are left there with no spiritual life !

They may be moral, and amiable, and never do any outward act of public sin for which they can be cast out of the church ; but they are spiritually dead. They may hold an orthodox creed ; they may sing and pray, and go through religious duties with mechanical regularity ; but as there is no Christ in

their religion, there is no life. Sometimes, on great occasions, they may put on the semblance of life, just as a corpse may, by galvanism, be made to roll its eyes, and toss wildly its lifeless limbs; but it is only a spasmodic exertion that soon settles down into the stillness and corruption of death. Ah! how sad it is to look upon these moral automatons, these types of the old Pharisee, and to think of how few of them are even likely to be saved. Oh! that the Divine Spirit might give efficacy to the appeal, "Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

Where there is true union with Christ, there will not only be life, but growing life. "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it *more abundantly*." But our eye must be fixed singly upon Christ, and our whole hope centred in him. He alone must be our strength. We must not be looking partly at ourselves and partly at Christ; now glancing at our own feelings as a ground of hope, and then at its merits.

It is no uncommon thing for young converts to

make great mistakes here. Deeply conscientious, they dread deceiving themselves; and fervently desirous of growing in grace, they watch and analyze every feeling and emotion of their minds. In the meantime, while thus engaged, their attention is turned away from Jesus, the great source of all spiritual life and growth; and thus they find themselves plunged into a dark jungle of doubts and fears. We have seen children, in their great anxiety for the growth of their little gardens, keep pulling up their plants every now and again to see if they were growing. The farmer who would pull up his corn to measure if it was growing, would not have much of a crop in the fall; and that Christian who turns away his eyes from the Saviour to analyze his own experience, and who is constantly putting every motive, feeling, and emotion, on the rack, to make it speak something good concerning himself, will find that, instead of growth and strength, leanness has come into his soul.

My dear reader, if you keep a constant nearness to Christ, taking him as your only hope, and his



spotless life as your bright example, there will be seen in your life a spiritual progress, brighter and brighter to the perfect day. With knowledge in your mind, grace in your heart, and obedience in your life, there will be such a symmetry of character, as will lead men to glorify your Father in heaven. In the hard conflict with your besetting sins, Christ will be your strength; nor will he leave you till your last foe lies vanquished on the field. Rash and impetuous passions will be displaced by calm and holy repose in God. Unholy bursts of imperious temper will be subdued by the meekness of Jesus. Peevish impatience will give way to holy submission to God's holy will. Worldly-mindedness will be overcome by communion with God, and a clearer conception of the grandeur and glory of eternal things.

Remember that all growth is gradual. It is not shooting up into a great and holy man in an hour, or in some moment of strong religious excitement, or of hallowed association. The soul, on such occasions, may receive a heavenly impetus that will

greatly increase its strength; but its real growth will be a progressive work, day by day. In the morning let the thought fill your mind, "My life is made up of days, and as the great business of life is to live to the glory of God, how can I best glorify Him to-day?" Seek earnestly to live to God for that one day, as if it were your last. However pressing your duties, be sure that you get time for two things—speaking to God, and hearing God speak to you. By speaking to God, I mean prayer, and by hearing God speak to you, I mean reading the Bible.

It is said of Col. Gardiner, that when in his campaigns he had to march before day-break, he always made a point of rising early enough to have time for prayer and reading the Scriptures. Instead of making your religion bend to your worldly convenience, make your worldly convenience bend to your religion. Pray earnestly and believingly for growth in grace, and for strength to support you amid the trials and temptations of life; but do not put prayer in the place of duties which

you ought to do yourself. God says you are to *watch* as well as pray. Suppose you pray that God would give you the victory over some besetting sin, and that you neglect to watch against that sin, and to cut off every temptation to its indulgence, as far as you can, you cannot expect God to answer your prayer. God will do nothing for us that we can do for ourselves. Prayer is not intended to encourage indolence. When we pray for deliverance from evil, and victory over our sins, we must watch, and fight, and struggle against them, or else our prayer is only a solemn mockery. God brought it as a very heavy charge against Israel that "they would not frame their doings to turn unto their God." We must be co-workers with God in the great work of growing in grace. We must shun the appearance of evil, and not even *seem* to come short.

And it is of vital importance that we have daily communion with God through his Word. This is to be our daily bread—bread for the soul. "Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that cometh out of the mouth of God." You would

not expect a child to grow physically, unless it were regularly to eat nourishing food ; and a child of God cannot grow in grace, unless he lives upon the food which God has provided. Read, therefore, a portion of the Scriptures every morning, before going out into the bustle of the world. Our Lord's prayer was, "Sanctify them through thy truth ; thy word is truth." If, then, you are to be sanctified in soul, it must be through the truths of the Word of God ; and, therefore, let your mind be deeply imbued with them. It is a condition of your nature that you will grow in something, and if not in good it will be in evil. There can be no standing still with an immortal soul. The soul craves for food, and if it is not fed and nourished by the pure words of God, it will betake itself to vile and worldly husks.

My dear reader, resolve to press forward to higher attainments in the Divine life. Be not contented with a low standard of piety—with merely being safe. Your example is a very high one, the Lord Jesus. Keep your eye fixed upon him, till

you are transformed into his image. An eloquent writer says : " The growth in grace is the only one not subject to decay and death. It has a vast assimilative power which *nothing* can resist. It feeds, therefore, on all the elements of man's life, on all the chequered experiences of his days. It feeds on joy; it feeds on sorrow. It rises by nature's growths, but does *not* sink in nature's decays. The outward man may perish, but the inward man is renewed day by day. Days of sorest sickness fill the springs of immortal health; and the day of death in the vocabulary of grace is but the earthly name for the first day of eternal life. Grow, then, in that which must forever grow—in that which will always be grace, although it will soon be glory, and always fresh and living as the beauty of the Saviour, or as the thoughts and affections of God."

" My hopes are passing upward, onward,

And with my hopes my heart has gone,


My eye is turning skyward, sunward,

Where glory brightens round yon throne."

#### IV.

### EVIDENCES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

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T MAY be profitable to point out a few of the evidences of growth in the Divine life.

One of the most prominent is entire submission to the will of God. All sin is founded on opposition to "the good, and perfect, and holy will of God," and all holiness is founded on a sinking of our own will into his. To accomplish the work of spiritual growth in the soul, God often uses the rod of affliction, as well as the privileges of his grace; and just as the chilling winds of autumn help to ripen the corn, as well as the warm sun of the summer; so it is a rare thing to meet a highly

spiritual Christian who has not been taught in the school of affliction. There are some plants that only emit their sweetest odors when pressed, and many a saint, in his increased ripeness of character, is heard exclaiming, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

It is a decided mark of grace advancing in the soul, therefore, when, amid the pressure of outward trials, we can obey the Divine command, "Be still, and know that I am God." What an exceedingly interesting and touching illustration of this spirit is found in the case of the the Shunamite woman. Her home, lately made so happy by the presence of one of God's choicest gifts, a lovely child, is now darkened with a terrible sorrow; for the loved one has been suddenly taken away by death. She and her husband had lived long together before their home echoed the voice of childhood's happy prattle; and now, as their affections begin to cling around the dear boy with unspeakable love, his young life fades away. Proudly and joyfully had they but lately gazed upon his intelligent face, and

thought what a comfort and prop he would be to their declining years. But, alas! with many a fond parent they are now compelled to say through their tears :

“One little bud adorned my bower,  
And shed sweet fragrance round,  
It grew in beauty hour by hour,  
Till, ah ! the spoiler came in power  
And crushed it to the ground.”

Apparently in his usual health, the dear boy left his fond mother in the morning, to mingle with the reapers in his father's fields, and by noon of the same day, that mother looks in the bitterness of her anguish upon his pale face, on which death has just stamped his seal. How does she deport herself under this crushing trial? Does she give way to that wild and clamorous grief that murmurs against God and his ways? No, she hastens to Mount Carmel to tell her sorrow to the man of God, and when he asks her, “Is it well with the child?” She answered, “IT IS WELL.”

What a lovely state of mind ! Sweetly meek and



submissive, under one of the most crushing sorrows that a fond mother can be called to bear, she looks up through her tears into the face of her Heavenly Father, and says, "It is well." She dreads to return to her home, for its chief joy has gone out in darkness, but *it is well*. That bright eye which always met the kindred glance of her own love, is closed in death, but *it is well*. Silent now is the tongue that spoke to her such loving words, and cold now are the lips that kissed her so fondly, but *it is well*. O, woman, great is thy faith! From thy bright example may we learn to trust God where we cannot see him, and to say in the pauses of the wildest storms that beat upon us, "*It is well*."

We live in the dispensation of suffering, the dispensation of the CROSS. The Captain of our Salvation was made perfect through suffering. If a crown of glory ever encircles our brows, if our feet ever tread the golden streets of heaven, it will be through the sufferings of our Lord. That is a wonderful passage, "Yet learned He obedience by the

things which he suffered." And he gave the world a wonderful evidence of how well, as a Son, he learned obedience to his Father's will, when in the terrible hour of his agony he said, "Not my will, but thine be done." And when he would teach his people the lesson of a quiet and holy submission, he puts them through fiery trials. "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction."

When death often visits our homes, and funeral after funeral leaves our door; when our business prosperity is blighted, and our highest worldly hopes tumble about our ears a pile of ruins; when health fails, and painful days and nights are appointed us; when separated from beloved friends, and the holy activities which we enjoy in their society, we are left, for months or years, to the solitude of our sick room; when friend after friend leaves us, till we stand amid the storms of life like a tree that the winds of heaven have stripped of every branch; then is the time to practice the lessons of resignation which we have been taught in the school of Christ. Happy is the man who, in such circum-

stances, can say, "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word."

It will greatly aid us in cultivating a submissive spirit, if we learn to see God in everything. It has been said that there are two things that we should never murmur about—things that we *can help*, and things that we *cannot help*—and that would about use up all the murmuring in the world. But, certainly, no true Christian will murmur when he clearly sees God's hand in his trials. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because *thou* didst it." An old writer says, "The strokes of his hand are love, as well as the kisses of his mouth." But let the mind get into the habit of looking away from God to mere *second causes*, then may we bid adieu to all profit from our affliction, as well as all consolation to support us under it.

In such cases the soul, instead of resting upon the unshaken Rock of God's Word, seeks to comfort itself with a bundle of foolish "ifs." *If* it had not been for that treacherous friend, I would not have lost my property. *If* I had called an-

other physician, my child might not have died. *If* I had gone to such a place I might have been in better circumstances. Ah! poor soul, God is above and beyond all your *ifs*. All second causes are but the agents of the great First Cause, which he either sends or permits, to work out his holy designs. O, what a calm joy it gives to confide in Him who sits at the helm of affairs!

It is true that God's dealings with us are often mysterious. His providences are a chain of shining and perfect links, but the links are often hid from our view. And this is well—it is part of our probation. We are to walk by faith, not by sight; and the more we are encompassed by clouds of perplexity, the better opportunity we have to confide in God's Word, and to rejoice that he reigneth. Jesus has not promised to explain all his dealings with us as we go along, but he *has* promised never to leave nor forsake us; and amid our greatest perplexities he gives us the assurance, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

O, glorious hereafter! when we shall know as we are known, and see as we are seen; when we shall have done with sin, and look into the grave of all our troubles; when we shall cast our eyes back over the way by which His hand led us; and see that it was neither too rough nor too long; and where we shall sing forever, "He has done all things well."

Another evidence of growth in grace is a truly grateful, thankful spirit. A gentleman was met by another who asked him, "Did you ever thank God for your reason?" "No, I do not know that I ever did," was the astonished reply. "Then do it now, for I have lost mine," said the other as he hastened on. The duty of thankfulness to God is seen in the fact that we possess many blessings, and have deserved none. As sinners, we cannot point to a single gift that God was under any obligation to bestow upon us, or to continue. Nor can we point to anything that we have deserved at his hand. All that makes life desirable is the undeserved gift of his goodness. That goodness envelopes us like a

garment. The earth upon which we tread is covered with it. If we look up into the heavens, it floats in every cloud, and flashes upon us from every star. It is new every morning and fresh every evening. The thankful heart exclaims with David, "How GREAT is thy goodness."

A grumbling, fretful, discontented man, is a walking pestilence. With a chronic frown upon his brow, and unhappy words welling out from his unhappy heart, he infects others with his miserable spirit. To come in contact with him is worse than going out into a cold damp fog, or a pelting hail-storm. If the weather is delightful, instead of enjoying it, he will tell you of the awful weather we are going to have. If his children are all healthy, instead of thanking God for it, he is thinking of the long lists of diseases they have yet to go through; and his gloomy imagination is filled with coffins and graves. If his present wants are supplied, instead of enjoying thankfully the goodness of God, he is thinking of untold privations in the future. He is constantly engaged in the unprofitable busi-

ness of crossing bridges before he comes to them. Blind to his present blessings, he sees only ills that may never come

How much better the spirit of the old sailor, who, when he fell from the rigging of his ship and broke his leg, remarked that he was very thankful to God that it was not his neck. I have heard of a man who was remarkable for a happy, cheerful, thankful spirit. He said that he never felt disposed to murmur but once, and that was on a cold morning, when the ground was covered with snow, and he was under the necessity of going out almost bare-footed. But he said that he had not gone far till he met a man who had *no feet at all*, and he thought that the time had not come for him to complain.

To count the many mercies bestowed upon us, instead of dwelling upon those withheld, or withdrawn, is the true way to cultivate a thankful heart. True thankfulness has nothing about it of stoical indifference to the trials of life. It is not like the rock that receives sunshine, shower, and storm,

with the same immovable indifference. The Christian may feel acutely his trials and privations, and yet cherish a gushing gratitude for God's many mercies continued to him. Job said, "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not also receive evil?" And he chose the catalogue of his trials with a burst of thankfulness, "Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

What a cheerful, contented, thankful spirit did the Apostle Paul possess! Amid all his trials he could say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." His trust was in God, and the largest wave that rolled across the ocean of life could not drive him from his anchorage on the Divine promises. In the darkest night of trouble, his hope in Christ shone bright, and he could look up with a bounding heart, and "thank God for his unspeakable gift."

The sweet Psalmist of Israel was a most grateful and thankful man. Prosperity lifted him up to exalted heights, and adversity sunk him down to great depths; but in every situation his songs of



praise rolled forth from his loving heart; and he has left behind him a record of joyous praise, the most sublime, graphic, and beautiful ever bequeathed to the church of God. He often cried to God from the very depths, but when God heard him, he was always seen coming back with his hearty song of praise. His cry for help under the pressure of trouble was loud, but his voice of praise was equally so. Alas! how many are the reverse of this. They are loud and clamorous for the supply of their wants, but utterly fail to come with adoring gratitude when God opens to them his hand.

An old writer says, "The Lord Jesus spreads a large table every day, and the majority who feed thereat are his enemies." Thankfulness to God is not natural to man. It is a flower that does not grow in the cold soil of an unregenerated heart. It must be planted and the soil prepared for it, by the Divine hand. It has been beautifully said that gratitude is the memory of the heart; and the heart that has been taken to Calvary, and washed in the blood that ransomed a world, will have a

strong memory of the blessing given, and a ready tongue to utter God's praise. Those who are not thankful for God's unspeakable gift, cannot be expected to be really thankful for any other gift. If they will not praise the Great Giver for the greatest gift, they are not likely to praise him for any of the smaller.

Besides, the heart that has learned true thankfulness at Calvary, will be prepared for the praise of heaven. There they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb; that is, they sing of God's redeeming love, and of his providential interferences on their behalf. From sinless lips, that great, faultless congregation shall fill eternity with their praise.

"Most that we know of heaven above,  
Is that they praise, and that they love."

Another evidence of growth in grace, is a stronger faith in the promise of God. A good man who had been very rich at one time, and then had been reduced to poverty, was observed to be happy in both conditions. He explained this by saying,

“When I had all of the world that heart could wish, I enjoyed God in everything; and when I had nothing, I enjoyed everything in God.” He had found out the meaning of that passage, “Ye are poor, and ye are rich.” Trusting in the sweet promises of God, he had a never-failing bank to which he could go for the supply of all his wants.

That was an exceedingly precious promise that Paul addressed to the Philippian Christians, “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ.” How very delightful that expression sounds, “My God!” What, although he was at that moment a prisoner for the truth, solitary and alone; what, although he had suffered buffeting, and reproach, and the most cruel persecutions; what, although he knew that in the future bonds and imprisonment and a violent death awaited him; yet, as long as he could look up to the God of the universe, that God who tunes the thunder’s roar and softens the rage of the lightning’s flash, and call him, “My God,” he was indeed a happy man. Men might imprison him in loathsome

dungeons, and scourge him till his blood crimsoned his prison floor; they might crush his limbs with torture, and his name with bitter reproach, but he need not care so long as his strengthening faith enabled him to say, "The Lord stood by me and comforted me."

When the bird in the tree sees any danger beneath, it flies up to a higher branch; if the danger gets still greater, it mounts still higher; and if very great, it flies off heavenward. So let all our trials and troubles drive us nearer to God, nearer to our heavenly home, so that we can take a firmer hold of the holy promises.

The promises do not assure us of the supply of all our *desires*, but of all our *needs*. Our desires are often wrong, and such that if God were to satisfy them it would be the heaviest calamity that could happen to us. As the child often cries for things which a wise and loving parent finds it necessary to deny it, so it is with our Heavenly Father. The child may want sweetmeats when it needs medicine, and cry for a knife or razor,

attracted by its bright glitter, but the parent supplies only those things that will be for its good. There are many things in our catalogue that will not be found in God's, but faith has unshaken confidence in his wisdom and love.

The promises of God are for the supply of *all* our need. All that the soul can require to support it in trial; to strengthen it in temptation; to fit it for duty; to give it the victory over besetting sins; to cheer in seasons of gloom; to guard in times of prosperity;—in short, all that the soul with its vast capacity for eternal good can need, is pledged to it. Oh! what a prayer was that which the Apostle presented for his hearers, "That ye may be filled with the fulness of God!" Ah! surely, the soul thus filled cannot have any real need unsatisfied.

We might enumerate many other evidences of spiritual growth, such as acting more and more from principle, possessing a deeper humility, and more of the spirit of prayer; but the above must suffice for the present. Let us seek to be Christians of high attainments in the divine life. Do


not be contented with a poor, low, sickly, dwarfish piety, that is always struggling for life, and almost ready to die ; but seek to have a strong, vigorous faith, that delights in doing hard work for Jesus, and enduring hardships in his service, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

‘Moralist ! afloat on life’s rough sea,  
The Christian has an art unknown to thee ;  
He holds no parley with unmanly fears ;  
Where duty bids he confidently steers,  
Faces a thousand dangers at her call,  
And, trusting in his God, surmounts them all.’

V.

DUTIES IN THE CHURCH.

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EAR reader, I take it for granted that you are now a member of Christ's Church, and that it has been your happy privilege to sit down, for the first time, at the table of the Lord. His first communion season is a time never to be forgotten by the Christian. Not that he is to attach any saving efficacy or superstitious importance to that ordinance above others, but because from its very nature, it brings his blessed Saviour directly before him saying, "Do this in remembrance of me." It was instituted by the Lord's direct command, and for the express purpose of commemorating his dying love, and is to be

promptly and faithfully observed till he comes in his glory.

It is sometimes the case that Christians stay away from the communion, because their feelings are not as lively as they could wish, or because there is some darkness upon their minds. I hope you will never be guilty of this great sin; for such it undoubtedly is. It is making our own feelings the rule of duty, instead of the positive command of Christ. It is setting our own notions up as the standard of what we should do, and what we should not do, instead of the positive and express will of the Great Head of the Church. The same rule, carried out, would lead us to neglect prayer, the reading of the Bible, attendance upon the means of grace, and in short, everything that we did not feel like doing at the time. Why should Christians stay away from the very means which Christ has instituted for their spiritual profit, because they can discover many imperfections about themselves? It is as absurd as staying away from the fire because you are cold, or from the table because



you are hungry, or refusing to take medicine because you are sick. In the keeping of God's commands there is great reward, and in waiting upon God, in the means of his appointment, the obedient soul renews its strength.

There are others who stay away from the Communion because they are offended with some of their brethren, or see in them some wrong. When you turn your back upon the Lord's Supper, and refuse to commemorate what your Saviour did for you on Calvary, you should remember that one of these days he is going to ask your reasons for so doing. And he will not be satisfied with *excuses*, but must have *reasons*. Will it be a *reason* to say that you did wrong, because some one else did wrong; that you deliberately concluded that you would neglect one plain duty, because some one else neglected another duty? If that brother has done some great evil in the sight of God, will it mend the matter for you to do another wrong by despising Christ's ordinances? You say that a certain brother has offended you, and that you will not

come to the Communion while he is there. Has Christ offended you also? If not, why do you seek to revenge the wrong done upon your Lord and his ordinance? He bids you come to his table in remembrance of him, and you reply, "Lord, I will not remember thee, because this brother has done wrong." Such conduct is wicked and unreasonable. It is sometimes the result of ignorance, but for the most part is the indulgence of bad temper, under the plea of conscientious motives. It is like Jonah, who professed to be *angry on principle*, and had the impudence to tell God to his face, "I do well to be angry."

In vindication of such conduct the passage is often quoted, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." This has no reference to the Lord's Supper, and if it had, it would be no excuse for the conduct we have been condemning. It says, "If thou remem-

berest that thy brother hath *aught against thee*," but such persons act as if it read, "If thou rememberest that thou hast aught against thy brother." Even if this applied to the Communion, it would be a brother having something against *you*, and not your having something *against a brother*, that would be a cause of staying away. My dear reader, when Christ spreads his table, it is your duty to be there, whoever is there. Of course you are to use your influence for the purity of the church, and the Master has laid down the proper way in which this is to be done; but forsaking the Communion is not that way.

And now that you are a member of the church, let me earnestly exhort you to be punctual in your attendance on all her appointments. There are some who make a small thing an excuse for absenting themselves from the house of God upon the Sabbath. Out about their business on Saturday and on Monday, whatever may be the weather, they will stay at home on the Sabbath, and urge excuses that they ought to be ashamed to present

to their fellow-men, and that they *will* be ashamed to present to the Great Judge. If a man has an important note to meet at a bank, he will not neglect it because the weather is a little too cold or too hot, or because the clouds threaten rain. No, he will go forth with energy and attend to his business. And yet the same man will make these things an excuse for not going to the house of God, and paying his vows to the Most High. I have known a lady excuse herself from going out more than once on the Sabbath, on the plea that she could not go out evenings, and yet be out to parties, or concerts, or lectures, two or three evenings in the week. Do such people think that God is going to be mocked in this way?

Listen to the language of one who had erred in this way, but repented: "A Sabbath at home, how unlike one spent in the courts of the Lord! I become restless—feel that something is wanting—my mind wanders—weariness pervades the body, and I am tempted to seek relief in sleep. I am unusually troubled with worldly thoughts, and find

a strong temptation to read something not appropriate to the day, to engage in worldly conversation, to repair to my store, or to visit my neighbor. A Sabbath at home is to me a Sabbath lost. I tried it once, and dread its influence. But I have learned something. Other men are like myself. Now I see why some of my fellow-Christians have so little religious enjoyment, knowledge and influence. They are frequently absent from the house of God. Who can afford to *lose a single* Sabbath? And yet how *many, many* such precious days are lost, and worse than lost, in this land of Sabbaths."

My dear reader, make a right beginning in this respect. Be punctual in your place at the house of God on the Sabbath, and at the prayer-meeting during the week. Every pastor has members of his flock that he can calculate with certainty upon seeing in their places regularly. He can depend upon them. They make their arrangements with a view to the appointments of the church, and make everything else bend before the calls of duty. If, on the evening of the prayer-meeting, visitors

call, they will ask them to go with them, or beg to be excused for an hour, so that the precious opportunity may not be lost. There are others whose attendance is fitful and uncertain. They permit every trifle to act as a hindrance in their way. If some notable lecturer is to speak, or some popular singer is to appear, or a political meeting is to be held, they are off in full pursuit of the novelty, while the prayer-meeting is left to get on as it may. If the pastor acted in this way, they would be the first to complain. But is there one Bible for the pastor and another for the member? If it is the pastor's duty to preach, it is the duty of the members to be there to hear him; and if he is to lead the prayer-meeting, it is the duty of every member to be there to sustain it. The same precious blood was shed for both, and they are both laid under the same law of love.

Such persons little know how much they lose by their neglect of the means of grace. An old Christian lady was noticed to be very regular in her attendance at church, and that she was always

there before the service began. She said that the Lord had promised to be there and meet with her, but that he had not said in what part of the service he would come—in the first hymn, or in the first prayer, in the reading of the Scriptures, or in the sermon; and, therefore, she resolved to be present the whole time, that she might not lose the blessing. She also remarked that she did not like to come late to the house of God, for it was a part of her religion not to disturb the religion of other people. What a blessing Thomas lost by not being present with the other disciples, in the upper room, when our Lord appeared to them, after his resurrection, and said, “Peace be unto you.” Of course, we do not know the reason why he was not there, but as he was evidently in a dark, unbelieving state of mind, it is likely he could have been there had he wished. He lost a most precious blessing to his soul by his neglect, and when the brethren next met him, and began to tell him, in glowing terms, what a good meeting they had, and how the Lord had appeared to them, he cut them

short by refusing to believe a word that they uttered, and sullenly said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Another thing that I would urge upon the young convert is, to cultivate a spirit of love toward every member of the church. This is a mark of true discipleship. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." Be it yours to promote the spirit of love by the display of a loving and an affectionate disposition. I would not be the man to disturb the harmony of a church of Christ, for the globe upon which I stand. Wo to the man by whom such offenses come! There are persons who are very sensitive and suspicious, and are constantly taking offence at their brethren where no offense was intended. They will say harsh and bitter things, but do not you imitate them, nor contend with them. It takes two to make a quarrel,



and by showing them a more excellent way, you may win them to a more lovely spirit. "Ye who are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." I was much struck with a remark made by the Duke of Wellington in one of his letters: "I am not in the habit of deciding upon such matters hastily or in anger; and the proof of this is, that I never had a quarrel with any man in my life." This is a remarkable statement, coming from one who had passed through such a long and public career, and who had been brought in contact with all kinds of men.

"Learn, O my soul, what God demands  
Is not a faith like barren sands,  
But fruit of heavenly hue;  
By this we prove that Christ we know,  
If in his holy steps we go,  
Faith works by love if true,"

If Christian faithfulness requires that you should notice offenses committed against the laws of Christ, by a member of the church, be sure that you go to work according to the rules laid down by

the Lord, in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew. Do not whisper the offense to some one as a *great secret*, who, unable to keep the secret himself, will get some one to help him, and thus the matter be talked about all over the church, before you have an opportunity of seeing the offending brother himself. I have known a world of trouble brought upon churches by such blundering. Go to the offender at once, and let the matter be talked of between him and you alone. And do not go in a haughty, magisterial, supercilious spirit, else you will be sure to fail in winning your brother. Like begets like; and a bitter, haughty spirit on your part, will beget bitter, haughty retorts on his. Go in the spirit of love and of prayer, remembering that you are yourself imperfect and liable to fall.

Should you not succeed, then you must take another brother with you, and let him be the most spiritual, loving, and prayerful spirit you can find in the church. If you both fail in bringing the offender to repentance, then you must bring the matter before the church. But be not ready to

take offense. Do not constitute yourself a kind of detective or spy in the church. Prevention is better than cure; and let it be yours to keep up the spirit of vital religion, so as to prevent backsliding in your own heart, and in the hearts of others.

“ Be not swift to take offense !

Let it pass !

Anger is a foe to sense ;

Let it pass !

Brood not darkly o'er a wrong

Which will disappear ere long ;

Rather sing this cheery song—

Let it pass !

Echo not an angry word ;

Let it pass !

Think how often you have erred ;

Let it pass !

Since our joys must pass away,

Like the dewdrops on the spray,

Wherefore should our sorrows stay ?

Let them pass !”

Permit me to enjoin upon you another point, before closing this chapter ; and that is, to make it a

matter of conscience to bear your share of the pecuniary burdens of the church, according as the Lord has prospered you. To build churches, and keep them in proper repair and order ; to pay the pastor's salary punctually, and to carry on the benevolent enterprises of the church, costs something ; and every member is under obligation to bear his full proportion of that cost. To unite with any organization, and enjoy the full advantages of it, and yet do nothing to help sustain it, would be regarded as supremely mean, even by worldly men. A gentleman being told of a certain rich man, that he was converted, asked, "Is his purse converted?" And the man who is really consecrated to Christ, will be willing to make pecuniary sacrifices to promote his cause.

What you do for the support of the cause of truth, let it be done spontaneously and promptly. Do not require the officers of the church to ask and urge you again and again. Do not require them to waste their time in finding you. These brethren do the collecting of the funds for carrying

on the affairs of the church voluntarily, and none but those who have tried it can tell what a laborious work it is. It is often made more so than it need be by the carelessness of some brethren. I have known a deacon call at a brother's office four times to collect his subscription without finding him in, and yet that brother passed the deacon's residence every day, and could have saved all this trouble by handing in what was due. When the collection is taken up for the missionary society, and you happen to be absent that day, do not let the cause of missions suffer from the fact. Act from principle, and give as in your Master's sight.

Let the following statement, by a pastor, illustrate this point. "A short time since, the Rev. Mr. A. presented to my people the claims of one of our great benevolent societies; and on Monday I called with him on several members of the congregation. Entering the counting-room of a merchant, the following interview, in substance occurred :

Mr. A.—"Good morning, Mr. B.; our openings

for usefulness are multiplying, and all that the churches will intrust to us, we can most profitably employ on the field of our labors."

Mr. B.—"I am always glad to see you, Mr. A., and to do what I can for your noble society," handing him a liberal donation; "we all ought to feel that we are but stewards, and be diligent in doing good while we may."

Mr. A.—"Thank you, thank you, Mr. B. We know you are a steadfast friend, and so is your partner, Mr. C. Is he in this morning?"

Mr. B.—"No, Sir; he is in Europe. He was unexpectedly called to France on business, and sailed in the steamer some weeks since, to be absent about six months."

Mr. A.—"Then, I suppose, we shall lose his subscription this year?"

Mr. B.—"No, Sir; one of the last things he did before sailing was, to request me to attend to his charities with the same care as to his other business, and to give for him to the various objects of benevolence, as they might come before our .

church, about the same that he gave last year, or, if anything, rather more, as this year we have been prospered. Do you remember what was the amount of his subscription last year?"

Mr. A.—"One hundred dollars."

Mr. B.—"Well, here is a check for one hundred and fifty dollars, which, I think, is about what he would give if he were at home."


Were all professing Christians thus to act under the eye of the Saviour, remembering that they are but stewards of his money, and give according to system and principle, there would soon be no lack of funds to carry out the plans of the largest benevolence.



## VI.

### DUTIES TO THE PASTOR.

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 THE relation between a Christian pastor and his people is represented in the Scriptures as very solemn and tender. He is God's messenger to speak to them the words of truth, to feed their souls with the bread of life, to watch for their souls as one who is soon to give an account to Him who sent him. He is to speak to them the truth in love, and not to suffer sin to pass unrebuked ; regarding neither the frowns nor the smiles, the cheering nor the derision of those around him. He is to seek, above all things, their edification and spiritual profit, to study to build them up in faith



and knowledge, and to have no greater joy than to see his spiritual children walking in the truth.

On the other hand, his people are to esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake. They are to give him a place in their hearts and in their prayers. They are to defend his reputation, to submit to his authority, as long as it is scriptural, to provide for his temporal wants, as long as he gives himself wholly to the Lord's work, and greatly to honor the message which he brings them from God. The relation of the pastor and flock is such that it should last for life, unless dissolved by some very marked and plain providence, in which the will of the Great Head of the Church will be clearly seen. The modern notion of *hiring* a pastor for a year, just as a farmer hires a man for his harvest work, so much work for so much pay, and then dismissing him, when a few light-minded people profess to be dissatisfied, and want a change, is a complete caricature of the apostolic relation of pastor and people.

Give your pastor your love and confidence. It

is natural that you should be deeply attached to that minister under whose preaching you were brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. That you should like his preaching best, and that you should feel a warm glow of emotion at the very mention of his name in after life, is all very natural and proper. No minister of good sense will feel offended, but rather pleased, to hear Christians thus speak of their former pastors. But when converts set up a particular minister as an idol in their souls; when they speak as if they could get good under no instruction but his; when no prayers can lead their devotions heavenward but his; and when they refuse to give their affection and confidence to any other servant of the Lord Jesus, they show that their religion is of a very superficial character, and justify serious doubts whether they are not *man's converts*, rather than the converts of Christ.

No matter what pastor, God in his providence places you under, if he be only a good man give him your hearty confidence and coöperation. He

may not be so talented and eloquent as some others, for God in his sovereign goodness has given a variety of gifts to his ministers, but he is God's messenger to you, and it is at the peril of your soul that you despise his message. By careful study of the Word of God, he has prepared his sermons with great mental toil, and poured his soul out in prayer over them, and there is good for your soul in them, if you will only place your mind in a proper attitude. Not the spirit of carping criticism and fault-finding is blessed, but that of earnest thirsting after truth, saying, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Professing Christians will sometimes go home from the house of God, and in the presence of their children and of the impenitent, utter the most unmerciful criticisms upon their pastor and his public efforts; and then wonder that their children are not converted. In the great day of God, it may be found that they have been the murderers of their children's souls, by filling their minds with prejudice against the truth and its messenger.

Go to the pastor in all your spiritual difficulties,

and make him the confidant of your soul-experiences. He will be able to cheer and encourage you, and to make the truth, in its beautiful adaptations, to bear upon your case. And when you receive good under his ministry, do not be afraid to mention it to him. It will not make him proud, but will cheer and encourage him. When any one seems impressed under his preaching, bring the case under his observation, that it may be made a matter of special prayer and inquiry. You will thus become a co-worker with your pastor; and he needs such aids. There is no work on earth so solemn and responsible, and none that so completely taxes all a man's best powers. None but those who have been called to the work, can tell the care and anxiety that fill the faithful pastor's heart, often chasing sleep from his pillow for whole nights. Resolve that if you cannot lighten these cares, that, at least, you will not intentionally add to their number. God may bless you for his servant's sake.

But again, let me urge you to pray for your

pastor. I am aware that this may seem a very common-place remark, but the *act* spoken of is no common-place thing. More depends upon this than we have even imagination to conceive of. See with what earnestness the Apostles urged the Churches to pray for them, showing what an important matter they regarded it.. A minister is set up in a prominent position. His every action and movement is watched and talked about. He is a target set up for every gossiping and malignant tongue to shoot at. He is a man of like passions with others, exposed to peculiar temptations, and Satan knows that if he can cause him to fall, the injury done to the cause of truth will be very great. We may be sure, therefore, that the enemy will try every hellish dart to bring him down. He needs the prayers of God's people as a man, that more than common supplies of grace may be given to him, that he may be an example to the flock, and be of good report to all.

And he needs the prayers of the faithful as a minister, that the Holy Spirit may be with him in

his studies and in his public ministrations. If the Holy Spirit is not with him, his best efforts will utterly fail. The attention of sinners will not be arrested, and their minds will grow darker and their hearts harder, under the preaching of the word. The church will not be interested as they ought, and the sad spectacle of a listless congregation will be exhibited in the sight of God, angels, and men. Can there be any sight more heart-rending to a truly godly minister, while preaching those great truths that thrill all heaven with delight, than to see some sleeping, some yawning, some gazing vacantly around, and frequently consulting their watches, as if thinking more of their dinners than the great business of the sanctuary. Yet all this is often seen when the sermon is able and eloquent, and when the best part of the week has been given to its preparation. Let the Spirit of God be poured out, and, under the same sermon, what a different state of things! A deep solemnity pervades the house, every eye is fixed upon the preacher, tears stream down many faces, that old

hardened sinner trembles so that he can scarcely keep his seat, and that old saint seems ready to shout aloud, "It is the Lord's doings, and it is marvelous in our eyes." One mighty wave of salvation rolls over the congregation, and preacher and people separate, feeling that it was good to be there. Such is the state of things that God gives to a praying people—to a people that plead and wrestle before God in private for their minister.

On this subject Prof. Finney says: "I have seen Christians who would be in an agony, when the minister was going into the pulpit, for fear his mind should be in a cloud, or his heart cold, or he should have no unction, and so a blessing should not come. I have labored with a man of this sort. He would pray until he got an assurance in his mind that God would be with me in preaching. I have known the time when he has been in darkness for a season, while the people were gathering, and his mind was full of anxiety, and he would go again and again to pray, till finally he would come into the room with a placid face, and say, 'The Lord

has come, and he will be with us." And I do not know that I ever found him mistaken."

Again he says, "I have known a church bear their minister on their arms in prayer from day to day, and watch with anxiety unutterable, to see that he has the Holy Ghost with him in his labors! When they feel and pray thus, O what feelings and what looks are manifest in the congregation! They have felt anxiety unutterable to have the word come with power, and take effect, and when they see their prayer answered, and they hear a word or a sentence come *warm* from the heart, and take effect among the people, you can see their whole souls look out of their eyes. How different is the case where the church feel that the *minister* is praying, and so there is no need of their praying! They are mistaken. The church must desire and pray for the blessing. God says he will be inquired of *by the house of Israel*. I wish you to feel that there can be no substitute for this."

Do not allow yourself to be made a party in any scheme against the pastor. If, for any reason, a



minister's usefulness in a place has come to an end, and it is thought that he ought to leave, that the good of the church requires it, then, let the leading men of the church that he knows have been his true friends, go to him in a straightforward Christian spirit, and tell him so; and in nearly every instance the separation will be effected without difficulty. But there are, unfortunately, in some churches men who will not pursue a straightforward way, if they can find a crooked one. They will wire-pull, and plot, and form parties, and seek the removal of a minister, when the highest interests of the church require that he should remain. One does it from the mere love of change, another because he has some friend that he wishes to get into the pastoral office, another because some outsider has become offended with the minister, and withdrawn his subscription, and some because the truth spoken has pinched their consciences.

My dear young reader, have nothing to do with these plotters. The whole thing is wicked in its inception and execution. God must frown upon

it, and will visit with a fearful "Woe," those by whom such offences come. Let the following statement by one who has had experience in this matter, teach its own lesson.

He says, "Many years ago, I was drawn into a scheme to uproot one of God's servants from the field in which he had planted him. I and the men that led me—for I admit that I was a dupe and a tool—flattered ourselves that we were conscientious. We thought that we were doing God service when we drove that holy man from his pulpit and his work, and said we considered his labors ended in B——, where I then lived; we groaned because there was no revival, while we were gossiping about and criticizing, and crushing instead of upholding by our efforts and our prayers, the instrument at whose hand we harshly demanded the blessing. Well, sir, he could not drag on the chariot of salvation with half a dozen of us taunting him with his weakness, while we hung on as a dead weight to the wheels; he had not the power of the Spirit, and could not convert men; so we haunted him like a

deer, till, torn and bleeding, he fled into a covert to die. Scarcely had he gone, when God came among us by his Spirit to show that he had blessed the labors of his dear, rejected servant. Our own hearts were broken and our wayward children converted, and I resolved at a convenient season to visit my former pastor and confess my sin, and thank him for his faithfulness to my wayward sons, which like long-buried seeds had now sprung up. But God denied me that relief, that he might teach me a lesson every child of his ought to learn, that he who toucheth one of his servants toucheth the apple of his eye. I heard my old pastor was ill, and taking my son with me, set out on a twenty-five miles' ride to see him. It was evening when I arrived, and his wife, with the spirit which any true woman ought to exhibit towards one who had so wronged her husband, denied me admittance to his chamber. She said, and her words were as arrows to my soul, 'He may be dying, and the sight of your face might add to his anguish!'

"'Has it come to this,' said I to myself, 'that

the man whose labors had, through Christ, brought me into his fold, whose hands had buried me in baptism, who had consoled my spirit in a terrible bereavement, and who had, till designing men had alienated us, been to me as a brother—that this man could not die in peace with my face before him. ‘God pity me!’ I cried, ‘what have I done?’ I confessed my sin to that meek woman and implored her for Christ’s sake to let me kneel before His dying servant, and receive his forgiveness. What did I care then whether the pews by the door were rented or not? I would gladly have taken his whole family to my home forever, as my own flesh and blood, but no such happiness was before me.

“As I entered the room of the blessed warrior, whose armor was just falling from his limbs, he opened his languid eyes and said, ‘Brother Lee! Brother Lee!’ I bent over him and sobbed out ‘My pastor!’ Then raising his white hand, he said in a deep, impressive voice, ‘Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm!’ I spoke

tenderly to him, told him I had come to confess my sin, and bring some of his fruit to him, calling my son to tell him how he had found Christ. But he was unconscious of all around; the sight of my face had brought the last pang of earth to his spirit.

“I kissed his brow, and told him how dear he had been to me; I craved his pardon for my unfaithfulness, and promised to care for his widow and fatherless little ones: but his only reply, murmured as if in a troubled dream, was ‘Touch not my anointed, and do my prophets no harm.’

“I stayed by him all night, and at day-break I closed his eyes. I offered his widow a house to live the remainder of her days; but like a heroine she said, ‘I freely forgive you, but my children, who entered deeply into their father’s anguish, shall never see me so regardless of his memory as to take any thing from those who caused it. He has left us all with his covenant God, and He will care for us.’

“Those dying words sounded in my ears from

that coffin and that grave. When I slept, Christ stood before me in my dreams, saying, 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.' These words followed me till I realized fully the esteem in which Christ holds those men who have given up all for his sake, and I vowed to love them evermore for his sake, even if they were not perfect. And since that day, Sir, I have talked less than before, and have supported my pastor, even if he is not a 'very extraordinary man.' My tongue shall cleave to the roof of my mouth, and my right hand forget its cunning, before I dare to put asunder what God has joined together."

The above narrative was spoken to one who had approached him to help in inducing a pastor to resign; and, therefore, he added, "I will not join you in the scheme that brought you here; and, moreover, if I hear another word of this from your lips, I shall ask my brethren to deal with you as with them who cause divisions. I would give all I own to recall what I did thirty years ago. Stop

where you are, and pray God, if perchance the thought of your heart be forgiven you."

There are a great many ways in which you can help your pastor in his solemn and responsible work. A very distinguished and successful minister said that a poor old lady in his church helped him to preach more than all the books in his library. She was always in her place in the house of God, and so deeply attentive that she scarcely lifted her eyes from his face, from the beginning to the close of his sermon. When he would bring out some sweet promise, or the rich unction of Gospel truth, her countenance would light up with joy, and her whole manner would show that she was enjoying a feast at the banqueting table of God. When the weather was depressing, the congregation small, or bodily languor made him feel as if he could scarcely preach at all, the sight of that one hearer's eager and expectant face would rouse up his whole soul. Sometimes in his study, when tempted to take, for the next Sabbath, some speculative theme in which he might display his learn-

ing, the thought of that old lady would call him back to the rich pastures of the Gospel ; for he felt that she would be disappointed of her Sabbath feast.

By a punctual attendance upon the prayer-meetings of the church, and promptly taking part in the services, you can greatly aid your pastor. Many stay away from these meetings altogether, and many who attend embarrass the pastor very much by their way of conducting themselves. They will come late, skulk away into some corner as much out of sight as possible, see the meeting dragging along for want of some one to take part, and yet keep their seats, and do nothing to promote the interest of the meeting. And yet such persons will be the very first to complain of the meetings being dull. Now, any thing that is worth doing at all is worth doing well. Go to the meeting early. Go forward near where the pastor is, as if you felt identified with the people of God and with the welfare of Zion. Do not allow long pauses to throw a damper upon the meeting, but speak and pray, and encourage others to do the same, so that the




whole time of the meeting may be taken up. All this will cheer and comfort the pastor very much, and, what is far more important, it will secure the approval of the gracious Saviour, who from his lofty seat in the heavens is looking down to see how you do your duty.

When your pastor feels it his duty to faithfully expose the sins of professors, and pointedly speak to sinners, sustain him in it, even when the word condemns yourself. He is God's servant, and at the peril of his soul he must preach what his Master bids him. A minister was once asked not to preach so hard, for if he did, certain persons would leave the church. "Is not the preaching true?" he asked. "Yes." "Does not God bless it?" "Yes." "Did you ever see the like of this work before in this place?" "No, I never did." "Well," said the minister, "the devil has sent you to me, to get me to let down the tone of my preaching, so as to ease the minds of the ungodly." The man took the rebuke like a good man, and never afterward complained of plain preaching.

## VII.

### DUTIES IN THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

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T IS the uniform desire of all true converts to do something to glorify Christ. The joy and peace which they have themselves experienced, they long to see others enjoy ; and having been led to feel the value of their own souls, they are made intensely to long for the salvation of the souls of others. Every soul that knows Jesus will long to work for Jesus, and the honest, spontaneous cry of the renewed heart is, "Lord what wouldst thou have me to do?"

Now, in looking for a field in which to labor for Christ, you will find a most useful and suitable one

in the Sabbath school. God alone can tell, eternity alone can unfold, the good that has been done by these institutions. It was a happy day for the church, a happy day for the world, when Robert Raikes conceived the idea of gathering the children together on the Sabbath "to hear of heaven, and learn the way." He had little idea of the great things that would grow out of such a small beginning, but those who are faithful in a few things, God will make rulers over many things.

In giving an account of his first efforts that good man says, "The beginning of this scheme was entirely owing to accident. Some business leading me one morning into the suburbs of the city, where the lowest of the people reside, I was struck with concern at seeing a group of children, wretchedly ragged, playing in the street. I asked an inhabitant whether those children belonged to that part of the town, and lamented their misery and idleness. Ah, sir, said the woman to whom I was speaking, could you take a view of this part of the town on Sunday, you would be shocked indeed, for

then the street is filled with multitudes of these wretches, who, released on that day from employment, spend their time in noise and riot, cursing and swearing in a manner so horrid as to convey to any serious mind an idea of hell, rather than of any other place. Upon the Sabbath they are all given up to follow their inclinations without restraint, as their parents, totally abandoned themselves, have no idea of instilling into the minds of their children principles to which they themselves are entire strangers."

He then formed the first Sabbath school in the world, and, after a three years' trial, he writes to a friend, "I wish you were here to make inquiry into the effort. A woman who lives in a lane where I fixed a school, told me some time ago, that the place was quite a heaven upon Sundays, compared to what it used to be. The number who have learned to read and say their catechism is so great that I am astonished at it." From this small beginning the work spread, till in Great Britain there were about one million of children in Sabbath

schools, in the course of a few years. And now, in the United States, and all over the world, millions of voices unite in singing, "I am glad I'm in this army."

And yet, though no one denies the good that these schools are doing, it is a melancholy fact that superintendents often find it hard to get teachers enough out of the church to sustain them. You will sometimes find a church numbering three or four hundred members, and yet their Sabbath school really languishing for want of teachers. This is a shame and a disgrace in the sight of the world, and must be highly displeasing to that blessed Saviour who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." I hope, my reader, that you will require no urging to engage in this work, but that a deep sense of duty, and personal obligations to Him who bought you with His own blood, you will enter upon it with all your heart.

In order that your mind may be suitably impressed with the importance of the work, think of

the infinite value of the souls you are going to instruct. They are to live forever, and your words may make impressions that will last through eternal ages.

"Don't write there," said one to a lad who was writing with a diamond pin on a pane of glass in the window of a hotel.

"Why?" said he.

"Because you can't rub it out," was the reply.

Remember that it is upon deathless spirits that you are writing and making impressions, and that these impressions are to remain forever—can never be rubbed out; and let this thought make you solemnly careful what thoughts you present to the minds of your young charge. You are to meet them again at the bar of God, and to give a strict account of what you have spoken.

Seek to meet your class, therefore, with a tender, loving spirit—that spirit that brought Jesus from his throne in glory to suffer the agonies of the cross. A great painter had just finished a gentle-

man's portrait, and the artist asked his opinion of it.

"It is certainly like, but much better looking," the gentleman said.

"It is the truth told lovingly," was the reply of the painter.

"There is a transforming, melting, magical power in love, that will be felt by the most careless and hardened. A teacher that has prayed for his class, and comes to them with his heart full of love for their souls, will have better order, better attention, and do a thousand times more good than he who loses his temper and permits himself to indulge an angry spirit. Let the following case illustrate, "Not long ago, a gentleman visited a Sabbath school, and being a little before the time of opening he looked around him. One class that he noticed had four boys in it. Soon their teacher, a tall, fine-looking young man came in, but with a downcast countenance. He took his seat with a cold, morose, almost angry look. He paid, seemingly, no attention to the boys. A cap was knocked off the seat. That

made a titter. The teacher turned around and said sharply, 'Boys, be still!' Soon something else caused a louder titter to pass around the class. Moving quickly round the second time, he said, 'Boys, I tell you be still!' and his face again assumed its cold expression, now slightly tinged with real crossness. A third slight disturbance occurred, when with look and voice and manner decidedly angry, he said, 'Boys, I tell you again to stop, I won't have this!'"

Now, it would be impossible for that teacher to do his class any good. It has been truly said that to make a child angry during his lesson, is to give him his food scalding hot. We must not forget that we were once children ourselves and had childish faults; and that it is hard for the young to fix their minds for any great length of time upon serious things. Make your instructions attractive by preparing yourself with illustrations suitable to the young mind. Study the lesson carefully, and with all the aids you can find. Be kind and affectionate to your little charge, and you will soon gain



an influence over them that will be seen in its blessed results forever. If they are sick or in trouble, visit them at their homes. Show them that you are their best friend, and you will bind them to you for life. When I think of my Sabbath school teacher my heart bounds with gratitude, and there is no man in the world I would be more glad to see.

Let your instructions be spiritual and practical, and such as will tend directly to the conversion of their souls. Dr. Payson says, "If God should place in your hand a diamond, and tell you to inscribe on it a sentence, which should be read at the last day, and shown there as an idea of your thoughts and feelings, what caution would you exercise in the selection! This is what God has done! He has placed before you immortal minds, more imperishable than the diamond, on which you are continually inscribing, by your spirit or example, something which will remain, and be exhibited, for or against you at the judgment day." There are some teachers whose instructions are almost entirely specula-

tive. The wanderings of the Children of Israel before reaching the promised land ; the description of the temple of Solomon ; the journeys of the Apostle Paul, with a geographical account of the countries which he passed through, and the cities he visited ; together with curious questions to be solved from the Bible. Now, I do not say that the knowledge of such things is not useful, but it does not tend to promote the *highest* object of Sabbath school instruction, the conversion of the souls of the young. The illumination of the intellect is good in its place, but the heart must not be forgotten.

Remember that children are capable of conversion at a very early age. Timothy, *from a child*, knew the Holy Scriptures, and was made wise unto salvation by them. I once knew a lady who, in her instructions, aimed at the conversion of her class constantly. It was her habit to pray for each one specially, to visit them at their homes for religious conversation, and to watch anxiously for any tokens of the truth beginning to take effect. The

result was, that conversions were frequent in her class. Teach your class *how* they can be saved from their lost and perishing condition. Hold up the CROSS, before their young eyes, in its saving power. The Gospel in its beautiful simplicity is admirably adapted to the mind of the child as well as the philosopher. And no matter what else you teach them, if you neglect this, you leave them destitute of eternal life. A man who had lately been converted said to his minister :

“ O, sir, give your congregation something to do that will make their peace with God, and you will please them mightily. It is just what people like. Why, the biggest miser in the parish would pull out his purse and give something to help build a church, and they would put a steeple on it that would reach up near the clouds, and put a weather-cock on the top of it again, if you would just tell them that it would help to save them. People don't like, sir, to think that they can do nothing; and when they hear ministers preaching, ‘ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved ;’

they step over it, and over it, and miss it, perhaps' like me, for twenty-seven years; and some, I am afraid, even till they die."

Another matter I would urge upon you. Be punctual and persevering in your attendance upon the Sabbath school. One of the greatest difficulties that superintendents have to contend with is, the irregularity of teachers in their attendance. They will take a class and begin with great seeming earnestness, but in a few months their zeal begins to flag, and they will be frequently absent; it may be, give up altogether. I have seen a class of thoughtless boys far more punctual in their attendance than their teacher, and he, too, a professing Christian. This is sad a sight, and calculated to do great injury to the cause of truth. My reader, I hope better things of you. Be in your place, at your post of duty, regularly, as the holy day of God dawns upon you. If compelled to be absent, state the reason to your class, and introduce a friend to take your place till you return.

And do not give way to discouragement, if you

are not so successful as you could wish. It is peculiarly a work of faith. You may be doing a great deal more good than you can see, and at any rate, it is yours to go on in the path of duty, sowing the seed, and leaving the result with God. "It is no use to try," said a young man, "they are so careless and unconcerned, that I am quite sure that no good can be done." An aged gentleman, to whom the remark was made, replied, "Such an argument would at one time have satisfied me; now, however, I can see its fallacy. It is forty years since I was first a Sabbath school teacher; and the boys whom I taught seemed so perversely deaf to all my words, that at length I considered myself justified in giving it up as a hopeless task. During the ensuing thirty years of my life, I continued uninterested in the cause of Sabbath schools, until a circumstance occurred which led me to see my error, and to return to my duty.

"One evening as I was returning from church, I was accosted by a man who smiled in my face and holding out his hand to me blushing, inquired if

my name was not Mr. P——? I answered that it was so. ‘Do you remember,’ added he, ‘a boy of the name of Dempster, that attended your Sabbath school about thirty years ago?’ ‘Dempster!’ cried I, ‘I remember Tom Dempster very well; and a very wild and wicked boy he was!’ And that wild and wicked boy was I,’ said the man; ‘though now, thanks be to God, I am a very different person from what I was then. It was your instructions, blessed by God’s Spirit, that brought conviction of the truth home to my mind, long after I had left your school.’

Said the old gentleman, as he concluded his statement, “My object has since been, to *do* my work, and *pray* for the Spirit to do his.”

“Ye who on each returning sacred day  
 Circled by listening youthful groups are seen,  
 Who pour instruction on the tender mind,  
 From the pure well-spring of eternal truth;  
 In joyful hope pursue your work of love.  
 The Shepherd’s eye, which watches all the lambs,  
 Upon you smiles, his kind approval cheers.

Hands, which the temple of our God shall rear,  
'Tis yours to guide and train to heavenly skill.  
They whom benighted heathen tribes shall hail,  
'How beauteous are their feet who publish peace,'  
Learn from your lips salvation's joyful sound."



## VIII.

### DUTIES IN THE WORLD.

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WHEN God converts a man he is no doubt that moment prepared for heaven. He is washed in the blood that cleanses from all sin, and by the righteousness of Jesus fitted for the society of the sinless congregation above. Why, then, is he not at once taken there? Because he has a work to do for others—a testimony to bear for the Lord Jesus, and an example of holy consistency of life to show, that may lead men to glorify his Father in heaven. He is to live to purpose, to live in a way worthy of an immortal being—a probationer for eternity. He is to seek to be useful, and every day he lives to try and make the



world better and happier for his having lived in it.

It is through his people that God carries on the mighty purposes of his love on earth. When Christ fed the people in a miraculous manner with a few loaves, it is said that he gave the bread to the disciples, and *they* gave it to the multitude. And so it is still. The church is the appointed instrument by which the bread of life is to be distributed to the nations of the earth. We sometimes hear it said of a professing Christian, "He is a good man, but he is not a useful man." The wonder in such a case is how he can be said to be good at all. The great difficulty is that, in the opinion of many, the indulgence of certain amiable dispositions, and good feelings, and benevolent emotions is called goodness; whereas if these are confined to the individual and do not bring forth fruits to bless the world, they become only a refined form of selfishness. The great reason why God converts a soul, is not merely to secure the salvation of an individual, but to start him on a career of usefulness that may bring forth blessed results, lasting as eternity.

Hence Christians in their new life are said to be "created unto good works." They are as much made to be useful as the sun is made to shine, or as the air is made to be breathed. It is not enough that we "cease to do evil," we must also "learn to do well."

If then a Christian professor is not a useful man, it becomes a very serious question whether he is a Christian at all. The great Master whose name he bears, went about constantly doing good. To do good to others was the delight of his soul, his meat and his drink. By day, by night, in season and out of season, he was at this work of love. His followers trod in his footsteps, and left us not a mere record of their feelings, their emotions, or their opinions; but of the "Acts of the Apostles." A Christian in a truly healthy state of mind, retiring to rest at the close of a day in which he had done nothing for Jesus, would be unable to find repose—would be disturbed by the groans and cries of those who are ready to perish, and would start from his unrefreshing pillow, re-

solved to work while it is called to-day. To save our country from the dark designs of traitors, we have witnessed such a display of patriotism as has astonished the world. By hundreds of thousands, men have left their prosperous business, their comfortable homes, their loving friends; and amid the roar of battle, while the ground quaked with the thunder of the conflict, and the heavens grew black with the smoke of death's engines, have bravely laid down their lives for their country. And this is right. But ought not the love of Christ to constrain us to make equal sacrifices for the souls of men?

Suppose, dear reader, that you are sitting in your own comfortable home, after the toils and the cares of the day are over, and the shadows of evening are gathering around you. All nature is calm and serene; and as the setting sun lights up the clouds into ever-varying and fantastic forms, and gilds every object around you with his departing glory, you feel your mind drawn into a solemn, meditative

mood, and lifted "From nature up to nature's God."

But you look up and see a stranger approach your dwelling. His first appearance awes and impresses you. His look is grave and solemn; his cast of countenance tender and benevolent; his apparel plain and travel-worn; but there is a holy dignity about him, that makes you feel as you never did in mortal presence before. A tear trembles in his eye and rolls down his expressive face, while his bosom heaves under emotions too big for utterance. He speaks—and his words are words of fire, that burn into your soul. His thoughts thrill your heart and exert an unearthly influence upon you. The things of eternity, in their awful grandeur, are brought near to you, as living realities; and the world and its gayest scenes are made to appear very empty things.

You are wondering who this stranger can be, when all at once your eyes are opened, and you see that you are in the presence of the Man of Sorrows—your own Saviour. As he did with Thomas,

he shows you his hands and his side, and bids you read there the evidences of his love. He fixes upon you that look that melted Peter's heart, and those eyes that swam in tears of anguish for you, and asks if you love him? You fall at his feet exclaiming, "Blessed Saviour, I do love thee; oh, help me to love thee more!"

Suppose, then, that he asks you, as an evidence of your love to him, that you go to those who are destitute of the means of grace, and tell them the story of his love, and urge them in his stead to be reconciled to God. You plead, like Moses, your want of eloquence, and your inability to go, under the circumstances in which you are placed. He then asks you, if not able to go yourself, that you will contribute of your worldly means to send others, who are able and willing to go? Now, could you, in his presence, who agonized upon the cross for you, and who is to put the crown of glory upon your head, refuse this most reasonable request?

Now, though Jesus is not thus personally visiting

us at our homes, and appealing to our hearts, he is really doing so through the various organizations which he has instituted for proclaiming his truth abroad. From his throne in the heaven he says, "Support them, and I will account it as done to myself." Standing upon the Mount of Olives, in view of the scenes of his retirement, and devotion, and tragic sufferings, his farewell command was, "Go preach the gospel to every creature." This is binding upon every Christian. We must either go or send. We live in an age of peculiar promise to the human family; and in our own country, new and vast fields of exertion invite the energies of the people of God. Forms of error, with a zeal that rebukes us, are entering these fields. Infidelity, in some of its most loathsome and dangerous forms, is uttering its blasphemies against the Holy One; while the religion of mere form and ceremony plants itself everywhere to block up the pathway of true, vital godliness. Between these enemies of God, coming from opposite directions, and with opposing watchwords, we are called to take our

stand and present Christ's blessed Gospel. It is ours to unfurl the banner that has been dipped in the blood shed for the ransom of a world, and go forth to the holy conflict with an unwavering faith.

It is amazing the amount of good that can be done by personal effort, if the heart is only truly alive to the work. Two pious young men had a considerable distance to walk in order to reach their place of worship. They accordingly agreed to invite persons as they went along, to go to the house of God with them. In this course they persevered, until they counted up no less than twenty, ten of whom were converted and became members of the church. Another young man gathered together, by his own exertions, a class of twelve boys whom he instructed in the truths of the Bible on the Sabbath. He went on in spite of all discouragements, making each member of his class a subject of prayer, till every one of them was brought to Christ. Two of them are ministers of the Gospel, and several of them are teachers of the young. The great thing is to be always active in the Mas-

ter's service, and watching for opportunities of doing good. Some are ready to avail themselves of what promises to be some great occasion of usefulness; but the little occasions that are occurring every hour of the day, they allow to pass by unnoticed. But if we are working away for Jesus, from the motive of love, no matter how small our sphere, we shall be approved as well as the missionary who influences the destiny of a nation, or the martyr who honors the truth at the stake. It has been said that it is a great deal easier to die *once* for Christ than to live *always* for Him. And it is easier to do some great act that will attract the attention of the world, than to go on patiently plodding through the daily duties that fall in our way every hour.

Many souls can be reached by personal conversation, that the public preaching of the word fails to move. A gentleman one day went into a store to do some business, and found the clerk alone. He was a moral man and a regular attendant upon the means of grace. The gentleman asked if he



felt any anxiety about the salvation of his soul. "I cannot say that I do," was the reply. "You believe that, as a sinner, you cannot be saved in any way but through faith in Christ?" "Yes, I believe it, but I do not feel it." "Then you acknowledge that you are exposed to die and be lost at any moment?" "Yes, I know that it is so." "Now then," said the gentleman, "you know your duty to repent of sin and believe in Christ; will you begin this moment to do your duty as far as you know how?" "I will," he replied. In a few days that young man was a happy Christian. How many professing Christians would have let that opportunity of doing good pass, and through such neglect that soul might have been lost.

I would seek deeply to impress upon the mind of the young convert the importance of cultivating great skill and wisdom in speaking to sinners about their souls. Great injury may be done by a rash and imprudent mode of approach. There is such a thing as being *wise to win souls*. There is a certain skill and tact which some possess that we

should seek to imitate. Let the following fact help to illustrate this. A very wicked, passionate man, became neighbor to a devoted minister of the Gospel. He began a career of sin, and declared his purpose to insult the minister if he should attempt to speak to him. In a little time after the hardened man was taken down by a severe sickness, and the minister resolved to go and see him.

"If you do he will insult you," said the friend who had informed him of the man's sickness.

"I will see him, nevertheless, and look to God for guidance and blessing," replied the minister.

Accordingly he called and inquired of the sick man about his health. He received very curt, and almost uncivil replies. But without saying one word on religion, he opened his Bible and said, "If you please I will read to you." He read the fifteenth chapter of Luke, offered a short prayer, and left.

Next day he again called, read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, again prayed, and left as before, without saying a word of his own. This course

he continued for some time, till one day the hardened sinner broke completely down, grasped the minister's hand, wept, confessed himself a sinner, and said he was a wonder to himself.

"It is God," replied the minister; "I have not spoken a word. God has spoken. He has done this."

"Yes," said the man, "I see it now. If you had spoken a single word of your own to me when first you came, or for some time after, I would not have borne it. Weak as I was, I should have tried to turn you out of my house. I was astonished at your daring to come to me. You took me by surprise. I could not be angry when you asked in such a kind way after my health. You read me those beautiful words. I knew they were not your own words, but God's own words, and I was silent. You shut the book, and I thought you would begin to reproach me and tell me what a sinful wretch I was, and then would be my time to speak; but I looked up and saw you on your knees, and heard

you praying for me, and then, without one word, you were gone."

We have here a proof of great tact and good judgment—a union of zeal and knowledge that is beautiful to look upon and worthy of imitation. When a sinner is angry or excited by intoxicating liquor, or in the presence of his wicked companions, it will often do more harm than good, to speak to him about religion, or rebuke him for his sins. So, to enter into discussion with him on some matter of controversy is improper. By getting the sinner alone, speaking to him in love, pressing the truth solemnly upon his conscience, and speaking briefly, you may expect the Holy Spirit to bless your efforts. And O, what a matter of eternal joy to win one soul to Jesus!

In conversing with inquiring souls, much prudence is required. Great care should be taken that the mind may not be diverted from the necessity of an immediate trust in Christ. When the mind is in an awakened state, it is ready to seek comfort any where but in the right place, in anything

but in Jesus. I have somewhere read of a young lady who was made to feel that she was a lost sinner. She was in an agony of mind, and could find no relief. She had a pious brother who was from home at the time, and she began to indulge the feeling that she must wait till he came home, and he would help her to come to Jesus.

When the brother came home, he was informed of the state of things, and he made up his mind to go to his own room without seeing her; but as he passed the door of her room, she sprang out and drew him back, crying out:

“O, brother, save me! save me! If you don’t I shall die!”

The brother reflected a moment, and then pushing her away almost roughly, and yet with a voice trembling with affection, said:

“And so you will come to *me* rather than to Jesus! *I* can do nothing at all for you.”

And thus left to herself—her false refuge torn away, she felt that all her trouble had been because

she was unwilling to come to Christ, and in a short time she surrendered to Him, and was at peace.


“Sow ye beside all waters,  
Where the dew of Heaven may fall ;  
Ye shall reap if ye be not weary,  
For the Spirit breathes o’er all.  
Sow, though the thorns may wound thee ;  
One wore the thorns for thee ;  
And though the cold world scorn thee,  
Patient and hopeful be.  
Sow ye beside all waters,  
With a blessing and a prayer,  
Name him whose hand upholds us,  
And sow thou every where,”



## IX.

### FOES TO GRACE.

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VERY thing good in this world of sin and depravity has foes to encounter, that aim at its destruction. This is especially true of grace in the heart. It did not grow up there naturally, of itself, but had to be planted by the Divine hand, and the same power that put it there must keep it there; the same agency that gave spiritual life must sustain that life. Nevertheless, we must be co-workers with God in this work. We must *watch* as well as pray against the approach of every spiritual foe. We must not pray against temptation, and then run into it; we must not ask for spiritual health, and then swallow

poison. Whatever we find to be an enemy to the work of God in our souls, we must be ready to sacrifice, though dear to us as a right hand or a right eye.

Now, one thing that tends greatly to destroy the life of God in the souls of many young converts is the rage for amusements that abounds in the present day. Unconverted men are called "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." This is the object for which they live, the paltry, selfish purpose to which they give up their whole being. This is to be expected from them, and we do not wonder at it. But when those who profess to be dead with Christ to the world, and to have risen with him into a new life, join with the world in their amusements, till both get blended together, and the distinction between the world and the church is nearly lost, then is there ground, not merely for astonishment, but for the deepest alarm. Permit me to say that I am no enemy to recreations and innocent amusements. The mind of man is not made to be ever upon the stretch. We have



as a nation too few holidays, and we should unbend oftener than we do, amid the beauties of nature, and the pleasures of congenial social intercourse. There is a time to laugh as well as a time to weep. It has been said that Jesus wept but never laughed. This I do not believe. He was not only God but man also, and it is a part of man's nature to laugh as well as to weep. It is true that we have no account of his laughing, and neither have we of many other things that doubtless he did, as man. To laugh is not sinful unless it is at sin we are laughing. The religion of superstition is always gloomy, but the religion of Christ is cheerful, and fills the soul with gladness. Still, all this is no plea for Christians indulging in worldly and sinful amusements. Our religion is to regulate our recreations as well as every thing else.

There are few things that tends to hurt the spiritually of Christians in the present day more than those religious *festivals* and *fairs*, gotten up for the purpose of supporting some religious and benevolent object. The object to be accomplished is so

good, the motive of many of those who take part in them is so good, that men get blinded to the many great evils connected with them. These evils are allowed under a religious name, and under a religious sanctions, so that conscience is confused and seduced, and ceases rightly to perform its functions ; and the young Christian is betrayed into calling evil good. In former times if a church wanted to build a place of worship, or pay off a debt upon one already built, they put their hands in their pockets and paid it. If voluntary aid could be obtained from the world, good and well ; but they never thought of getting up an entertainment that would please the ungodly, and compromise the dignity of truth, for the paltry purpose of getting a little money from the hands of the wicked. O, no ; they would have worshiped God in a barn, or in a log school house, all their days, rather than have done so !

To see God's professed people, respectable matrons, old men, church officers, and young Christians, get up tableaux and theatrical performances,

and dress themselves up in some fantastic style for the purpose of amusing a gaping crowd,—is most mortifying and distressing to sober, thoughtful Christians. And then I am told, that sometimes the whole ends with a *raffle*, which every body knows is a species of gambling. O, it was a sad sight to see the wicked gambling for our Lord's garments at the foot of the cross, but it is still sadder to see professed Christians encouraging the same evil, in the name of our holy religion. "My soul come not thou into their secret; my honor with them be not thou united!"

The spirituality of individuals and churches is very much injured, in our cities and large towns, by those fashionable parties that have come so much into vogue of late. These parties are often upon a scale of great extravagance and expense, quite inconsistent with the simplicity of Christ; and this evil increases as a rivalry gets up among the members of the church, as to whom will give the finest entertainment. The whole winter passes off in a round of these assemblages, so that Chris-

tians will be called to attend two or three of them in a week. The entertainment is kept up to a very late hour, so that family worship is neglected in most of the homes of those who attend them, and it is to be feared *closet* worship too. A winter spent in this kind of dissipation is sure to injure the devotional spirit, and to break up those fixed habits of godliness which all professors should form and preserve. Of course I do not utter one word against social enjoyment with the good. We are made social beings, and many of the purest enjoyments of our lives spring from this source. Religion, instead of repressing this part of our nature, directs and elevates, and refines it. But when our social feelings are indulged at the expense of the health of the soul, we may be sure that they have been carried too far.

One evil leads to another, and I have been told that often these parties end with dancing. Dancing in Christian homes and by Christian people! If you were struck suddenly with a fatal disease and eternal realities were to burst upon you as only

a death-bed can reveal them, would you send for one of the *dancing Christians* to pray for you? Or would an awakened soul go to one of them with the question of questions, "What shall I do to be saved?" Dancing begun at these parties leads to ball-room, the ball-room leads to the theatre, that to the bar-room, and the whole to perdition. Take the following incident from the experience of a pastor :

"A most interesting work of grace occurred in a Presbyterian church in this city. Many anxiously inquired what they should do to be saved. Among this number was a young lady who listened to the voice of truth, and was troubled. Conscience spoke, and she felt the claims of God on her; but she could not now attend to the matters of her soul's salvation. On one evening the meeting was more than usually interesting and solemn; the next evening a ball was to be held, and from this scene of solemnity she hurries away, and joins in the giddy dance. By the sound of the violin and the voice of melody she aims to drown the

admonitions of conscience; and for a little time she succeeded. Amid the display of fashion, the glare of lights, and the intoxication of the scene, conscience slumbered, and suffered the gay transgressor to revel undisturbed in forbidden pleasure. But again she felt herself a sinner, and again she is at the meeting for conversation and prayer. Her heart is the seat of my painful emotions. The claims of truth and duty are urged. She *would* yield—she *would* follow the Saviour, but the theatre, the ball-room, her gay companions, how can she crucify these? Unfortunately she was solicited to attend another ball. She went. Satan, as an angel of light, shed a deceptive radiance over the scene; she tried to be happy—tried to believe that her seriousness was melancholy, and that she had yet plenty of time to prepare for eternity. She returned to her dwelling; but she returned to die—to die without hope. “I did not think,” said she, “that I should have to die so soon.” One evening at the inquiry meeting; the next at the ball-room—gayest among the gay; a few nights

more, and she is in her coffin. One week, with a heart light as air, she goes to a store to purchase trimmings for a ball-dress; on the next week her friends go to the same store to purchase her shroud."

I believe it was the Rev. Richard Cecil, who, when traveling in a stage-coach, heard a young lady talking to her companion about an anticipated ball. "O!" said she, "I do enjoy a ball so; I enjoy the thought of its coming on; I enjoy the pleasure while it lasts; and I like to think of it after it is over." "I think, madam," said Mr. Cecil, "there is a fourth pleasure that you have forgotten to mention." "Indeed, sir, I don't remember it; what do you refer to?" "The pleasure it will afford you, madam, when you come to die." There mark was an arrow sent by the Spirit of God, and led to her conversion.

Just as Satan quoted Scripture even to our Lord, so do men quote the Bible to defend dancing. David dancing before the Lord, as an expression of his joy when the ark of God was restored; and

Miriam dancing at the wonderful national deliverance at the Red Sea, are often referred to. That was the mode in which the people of the East expressed their joy, just as rending their garments, or throwing dust and ashes upon their heads, was their mode of expressing sorrow. We have no instance of promiscuous dancing; whenever mentioned, the sexes are separate. This was the case with Miriam, and also in other places, when referred to. But to make these cases an excuse for the promiscuous intermingling of the sexes, the indecent polkas and waltzes of modern times, the shameless exposure of person, the late hours, and all the many evils that attend the ball-room, is an insult to the sacred Scriptures, and an outrage upon common sense. It is seeking to make the source of all truth and goodness responsible for error and wrong.

And what shall we say of professing Christians going to the theatre, the circus, and such like places of resort? The best that can be said of the theatre is, that it is a place of vain amusement. Now,



recreations and amusements are sometimes necessary; and doubtless there are amusements in which good people can engage with the strictest propriety, and with advantage to themselves, both physically and intellectually. But the theatre is not one of them. It has been well said, "Amusements must be blameless, as well as ingenious; safe, as well as rational; moral, as well as intellectual. Whatever pleasantry of idea, whatever gaiety of sentiment, whatever airiness of expression, should we not jealously watch against any unsoundness in the general principle, and mischief in the prevailing tendency?" Tried by such a test the theatre is a place utterly unfit for good people to visit. It inculcates false principles of action and false views of life; it deadens all the finer feeling of our nature, by making wounds, shrieks, groans, murders, assassinations, the subject of a pleasing excitement; and in short, many of its most popular exhibitions are grossly immoral.

Theatres show what their direct tendencies are by gathering around them the worst houses and the

worst characters in a community. The lowest drinking houses, gambling hells, and places of public infamy gather as if by attraction around the theatre. There are to be found attracted the swindler, the gambler, the black leg, the coarse, the vulgar, the blood-thirsty—vile men and shameless women. The Common Council of Boston at one time prohibited liquor from being sold on the premises of the Tremont Theatre, and the trustees publicly protested against the order, on the ground that it was impossible to support the theatre without it. Are these the kind of places that Christians should patronize? The ancients tell a story of a holy monk who bitterly reproached the devil for stealing a young man who was found at the theatre, when Satan replied, "I found him on my premises, and took him."

The theatre has, it is true, been called a school of morals; but it is easy to give the finest names to the vilest things. On this point the Rev. Dr. Thompson, of New York, says: "If the theatre is a place of wholesome moral influence—a school of

virtue, as it is sometimes called—then it is proper for me as a Christian minister to frequent it, and to urge my church to do so likewise. But this would be considered quite out of character by the mass of play-goers. And why? Not merely because of my profession, but because the theatre is known to be an unfit place for any serious-minded man. Some years ago, a clergyman residing in the vicinity of Boston, visited a theatre in that city in order to study the elocution of a distinguished actor. To avoid being recognized, lest his example should do injury, he took his seat in the pit with his hat drawn over his brow. But a wag near by soon discovered who he was, and when next the curtain dropped, peering under the discomfited clergyman's hat, he pronounced his name aloud with an oath and an exclamation of surprise, and then added with mock gravity—'Let us pray.' The effect was highly ludicrous. The audience was convulsed with laughter. But why so ludicrous? Is prayer a ludicrous thing? Is it ludicrous for a sinful, dependent creature to offer supplication to

his Maker? No; there is a great deal of solemn appealing to heaven even on the stage. Aside from the manner, it was the felt incongruity of the thing that provoked a laugh. The thought of prayer in such a place, the presence of a Christian minister, or of any man making pretensions to piety, amid such scenes, amused that pleasure-loving audience. That laugh disclosed the character of the place, and the object of their assembling. Prayer in a theatre would be the richest farce."

We may rest assured that where there is a taste, a craving after the excitement of worldly amusements, there is a very low state of religion in the soul, if there is any religion at all. The soul that lives near God has a fullness of joy and peace the most satisfying. The soul that drinks of the river of life, will not stoop to drink of the filthy puddles of sin. The heart in which Christ dwells has no room for his enemies.

"'Tis not for man to trifle! Life is brief,

And sin is here.

Our age is but the falling of a leaf,  
A dropping tear.

We have no time to sport away the hours,  
All must be earnest in a world like ours."



## X.

### HELPS AND HINDRANCES.

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MY DEAR reader, in your journey heavenward, your highest interest require that you should avail yourself of all the *helps* you can, having your mind deeply impressed with your personal responsibility to God. A young Christian made this entry in his diary: "Resolved that I will, the Lord being my helper, think, speak, and act as an *individual*; for as such I must live, as such I must die, stand before God and be damned, or saved forever and ever. I have been waiting for others; I must act as if I were the only one to act, and wait no longer."

That is just what is wanted; not to be comparing ourselves with others, with the members and office bearers of the church, and setting them up as our standard, but each aiming at eminent personal piety for ourselves. Each must work for God every day, as if there was not another worker in the world. "One who knew Harlan Page well, says, "I have well considered the assertion when I say, that during nine years, in which we were associated in labors, I do not know that I ever passed an interview with him long enough to have any interchange of thought and feeling, in which I did not receive from him an impulse heavenward—an impulse onward in duty to God and the souls of men." He did not wait for the church all to go to work, before he would do anything; but did his own work that lay around, as in God's awful sight.

It will be a great help to have special seasons set apart for the study of the Bible, accompanied with much earnest prayer for the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. The opinion of the world, the standard of piety in the church, the attainments of

deacons and ministers in personal religion, are not what we are to look at, but the rules that God lays down in the Scriptures. The word of God fixes a very high standard of spirituality, and tells us that to be spiritually-minded is life and peace. Nothing should be allowed to interfere with our hours of private devotion. It is the habit of some Christians to take, in the morning, a short portion of Scripture to meditate upon during the day; and amid the pauses of business, or as they have opportunity, their minds recur to it. This is an excellent plan. It brings the soul into direct contact with God,—with his thoughts and his words.

And we should read such good books as we find have a reviving and spiritual influence upon our minds. A good book is like a good companion; it helps us on in our heavenly journey. I can never forget the happy influence exerted upon my mind when first I read Baxter's "Saint's Rest." A good book is a quiet, silent friend. It lies there unobtrusively, waiting patiently till we are ready to take it up, and then gives us the glowing thoughts of



one who may now be rejoicing among the angels in heaven. Eternity alone can declare the good that has been done by the press when consecrated to God. It is impossible to read such books as Jay's "Exercises," Taylor's "Holy Living," Owen on "Spiritual-Mindedness," Cecil's "Remains," and Nevins' "Practical Thoughts," without feeling that they draw us nearer to God and heaven. The memoirs of good people, such as Martyn, Payson, Brainerd, McCheyne, Isabella Graham, Dr. Judson, Carey, and Mary Lundie Duncan, are very refreshing to the soul. We catch to some extent their spirit, share with them in their joys and sorrows, and learn to follow them as they followed Christ. While there are many very bad books, so bad that they seem as if they had been scooped up out of the pit of perdition, let us thank God that there are books that in tens of thousands of dwellings are speaking for God with a voice that never tires.

Do not neglect to pray for the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. If you are to have solemn, heavenly, elevating thoughts, the Spirit must impart

them. If you are to loathe sin, pant and thirst after God, and long intensely after holiness of heart, the Spirit must implant these feelings in your soul. Every glimmer of holy light, every spark of celestial fire that comes into our darkness and coldness, comes from this Divine Agent. Let it be your earnest, constant prayer, that you may have His presence with you always. In the burning words of Dr. Harris, be urged to this: "O, Christians, is there such a doctrine in our creed as the doctrine of Divine influence? Is there such an Agent in the church as the Almighty Spirit of God? Is he among us expressly to testify of Christ—to be the great animating spirit of his missionary church? And is it true that his unlimited aid can be obtained by prayer—that we can be baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire? O, ye that preach, 'believe the promise of the Spirit, and be saved.' Ye that love the Lord, keep not silence; send up a loud, long, united, and unsparing entreaty for his promised aid. This is what we want. And this is all we want. Till this be obtained, all the angelic

agency of heaven will avail us nothing; and when it is obtained, all that agency will be unequal to the celebration of our triumphs."

The young convert must endeavor to cultivate great tenderness of conscience. Paul said, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward man." Young converts generally have a tender conscience. It may not be as well enlightened as it should be, but it is sensitive and quick to speak for God. But if it is trifled with, the whole soul will soon feel the shock. If its voice is frequently stifled, and its admonitions neglected, the soul will soon walk in darkness. If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. It is a dreadful thing to sin so that a man's own conscience becomes his bitterest enemy. A pastor being called to see a dying man, received from his lips the following account of himself: "Twenty years ago I was a member of a church in W. I was tempted, and quickly yielded to the poisonous cup. I became intoxicated, was called

to trial, refused to make a proper acknowledgment, and I suppose my name was stricken from the book. But God's eye has watched me ever since in all my crooked ways. I see how reluctant he has been to let me go. He has brought me in a way that I knew not, and he has never given me up. O, he has been so good, so merciful, so kind, so long-suffering to me !”

“But,” said the pastor, “how do you feel when you think how you have treated him?”

“O,” said he, in tones of deepest anguish, “that’s what hurts me ; that’s what hurts me.”

Yes, the stings of a rebuking conscience are hard to bear, but it is a still more dreadful thing to have a conscience that has ceased to rebuke. A good conscience is one that speaks loud enough to be heard. That speaks truth when it is heard ; that speaks in time to prevent the commission of evil ; and that perseveres in speaking till it is obeyed. James Brainard Taylor says in his journal, that it is a *bad sign* when we find ourselves looking *back to past Christian* experiences for

evidences of piety. And the professor who does not keep a clear conscience is nearly always found so doing. How much better to keep a sweet, present consciousness of the Divine favor, like the man who when asked if he wished to recover or not, said, "Really, my friend, I do not care which. If I die, I shall be with God; if I live, God will be with me."

We come now to speak of some *hindrances* that lie in the pathway to glory; with which this little volume shall close.

Uniting in marriage with one who is not a professor of religion, is a great hindrance. There is no earthly relation so tender, so intimate, as that of husband and wife. If there be a radical difference of tastes and inclinations between them; if one has an indifference, or it may be an aversion, to what the other regards of supreme importance, there is a sad drawback upon the happiness of both. Especially when the subject of religion, the greatest and most important that can engage the human mind is the subject of difference, to get along at all

there will be a resort to compromises, and these in religion are always dangerous. We have enough of hindrances to encounter from our own hearts, from the world, from the circumstances in which we are often placed, without deliberately choosing a life-long hindrance in our bosom companion.

Suppose a devotedly pious young lady is united to a man who is not a Christian. He may not persecute her for following out her religious convictions, though that is often done, but he will have no sympathy with her in those things that are dearest to her heart. He will look coldly upon her religious feelings and observances. Perhaps he will even sneer at them; at first, it may be, by way of joke, but afterwards in bitter earnest. To get him to go with her to church, she is tempted to promise to go with him to places that her conscience does not approve, and thus a great wrong is done to her moral nature. No family prayer, no spiritual conversation, no coöperation from him she loves in her religious enterprises, and no good Scriptural hope of spending an eternity with him in heaven;—it is

easy to see what a sad drawback upon religious progress all this will be. It is true she may be the means of her husband's conversion, but alas! it is still oftener the case that he becomes the cause of her apostacy. Every pastor is familiar with the gradual steps of declension. Her class at the Sabbath School is given up. She is found missing at the prayer-meeting. She attends but once on the Lord's day, and often not even that. Her duties as a tract-distributor are given up; and, in short, her connection with the church becomes a mere matter of form. When spoken to upon the subject, her ready excuse is, "You know that my husband is not a professor of religion, and I cannot do as I would wish."

And when it is a pious husband that is joined to an unconverted wife, the influence upon him is equally bad. The power of woman's influence is a favorite topic with the orator, and too much can scarcely be said upon it; but is a power for evil as well as for good, according as it is exerted. A good woman is a crown of glory to her husband,

and will prove a blessing to him, both for time and eternity; but many a promising young man has been utterly ruined by uniting himself to an unconverted companion, who by her gay, thoughtless, giddy, and extravagant conduct, has blasted his prospects for both worlds. If children are given them, the influence of the mother upon them is disastrous. In short, the result is often that the husband yields point after point to the opposition of his wife till there is little left of his religion but the name, if even that is not gone. What better could we expect from the wilful violation of God's rule, "Be not unequally joined together with unbelievers," and, "Marry only in the Lord."

Another great hindrance to the progress of spiritual religion in the soul, is a strong absorption in the excitements of party politics. Of course, when a man becomes a Christian he does not cease to be a citizen, and when we take up our duties in the church, we are not absolved from those in the world. True religion is the friend of human liberty, and it would not be right for good people to



give over national affairs into the hands of the ungodly. The Christian is as responsible for the proper use of his vote, as for any other talent, and should carry his religion into the arena of politics, as well as into his business.

But while all this is true, it is no excuse for a Christian man going into all the squabbling, wire-pulling, and absolute chicanery and falsehood of political parties. He cannot attend these meetings night after night, perhaps to the entire neglect of his religious privileges, and hear stump orators rave, and swear, and misquote, and sometimes ridicule the word of God, without great injury to his spiritual nature. In proportion as he allows himself to be drawn into the whirlpool of excitement, he will feel more and more disposed to neglect his Bible and his closet, and even the house of God will seem a dull place after the wild excitement of the political gathering. It is no excuse to say that we are acting on the right side; for a right thing may be done in a wrong way. We should put our religion into our politics, and not our politics into

our religion. The frequency with which our elections occur makes the danger from this source the greater.

The last hindrance I would mention, is becoming too much engaged in our lawful worldly business. There is more danger from this source, because it is proper to be diligent in business, and it is difficult for us to discover the boundary line between duty to ourselves and our families, and the indulgence of a worldly-mindedness and covetousness. We know, however, that prosperity has a tendency to harden the heart, and that the attainment of wealth here has made many poor forever. When Garrick was showing Dr. Johnson round his new house and estate, and through his splendid drawing-rooms, he said, "Ah! David, these are the things that make death-beds terrible." Alas! how many professing Christians I have seen make their business their idol, give their days and their nights up to it, till it seemed as if they had not a thought for any thing else! The fruit such reap is misery.

We are told that a young person once expressed

to Dr. Franklin his surprise, that the possession of great riches should so often be accompanied with anxiety and unhappiness; and referred to the case of a rich merchant, who did not seem nearly so happy as some of his own clerks. The doctor took an apple from a fruit basket, and gave it to a child in the room, who could scarcely grasp it in his little hand. He then gave it a second, which filled the other hand, and then choosing a third, of great size and beauty, he presented that also. The child tried to hold the three apples, but failed, and dropping the last on the floor, burst into tears. "See," said Franklin, "there is a little man in the world with more riches than he can enjoy."

Some time ago, two gentlemen stepped into the same compartment of a railway train, just as it was starting from Greenwich to London, England. One was a minister of the gospel, the other a rich merchant of high standing in the metropolis. The merchant held in his hand a circular which he was reading with great uneasiness, and at last he exclaimed, "Well, that is enough to drive any one

mad?" The minister looked at him kindly and said, "I trust, sir, nothing serious has occurred to disturb you." "Serious enough, I assure you," was the reply; and he handed him the paper he had been reading. The minister saw that it was a printed list of the prices of stock, for that day, in the London market. Supposing that he had lost by some stock-jobbing speculation, he handed the paper back to the merchant, remarking that those who meddled with such matters must expect to suffer losses sometimes. "Oh," said he, "you are mistaken. I have suffered no loss. But the truth is I purchased, some time ago, at sixteen. I sold a few days ago at forty-three, and now I find from that circular that I might have got forty-six! That's the thing that vexes me so much."

The minister spoke to him effecttionately and earnestly about his soul, and upon asking him if he attended any place of worship, he frankly replied, "I go to church as regularly as I go to London Exchange; but I can't say that I get much good, for the world rushes on me like a flowing

tide, and my mind becomes distracted with thoughts about this and thoughts about that, so that the best sermons are, in a great measure, thrown away on me. I have been very much prospered, but the mischief is, the more I make, the more miserable, somehow, I become. Why, sir, in business — business — *business*, is the only essence of my existence. It seems absolutely necessary to my life, and yet, alas! strange to say, it is proving the only bane of it. I am becoming its veriest drudge, and its most abject slave, and how I am to rid myself of it is more than I can tell." Poor man! while he thus poured out his feelings he became very much affected, and wept very bitterly.

As my pastoral duties have lain mostly in cities, I have seen a great deal of this kind of thing; — men killing themselves by inches, body and soul, in the service of mammon. Of course this is done under some pious pretence, such as wanting only to obtain a competence, to provide for their own households, and to obtain means to do good. But in almost every case of this extreme devotion to

business, it is the love of gain that is the propelling motive. As some one has aptly said, "Many men want wealth — not a competence alone, but a five-story competence; and religion they would like as a sort of lightning-rod to their houses, to ward off, by and by, the bolts of divine wrath."

This grasping spirit of avarice and speculation is like the morbid appetite of the drunkard, strengthened and increased by indulgence. All the warm, generous impulses of the soul become repressed and die out. The heart becomes contracted by selfishness. The eyes have nothing looking out of them but greedy cunning. A good bargain has far more attractions than a good action. The noble, generous, benevolent souls around us, that are blessing the world with deeds of love, are not those who are very rich. A wide heart and a wide estate seldom go together. Indeed, the man who does his duty to his God and to his fellow-men can never be very rich. A man can only become very rich, either by defrauding *others*, or by defrauding *himself*. Many a man who, in his business transactions, has

been strictly honest to those with whom he traded, has been dishonest to himself; and when he dies, it may be said of him, as Wesley said of one, "He died *wickedly rich*."

My reader, seek the true riches — be rich toward God. Your fields may be fruitful, but your heart barren. Your shop may be prospering, but your soul bankrupt. You may have a hospitable home in which you entertain your friends in a princely style, while you shut the door of your heart in your Saviour's face. Oh seek the pearl of great price! Lay up treasure in heaven, where funds never depreciate, and where gold never changes its value. With your weary, worn, troubled heart, restless as the heaving, moaning sea, cling to Jesus for sweet repose. Weary of the world, with its wasting cares, and toils, and unsatisfying pleasures — weary of yourself, with your broken vows, and empty resolutions, and purposeless determinations, cling by faith to him who has promised to give rest to your soul.

"Jesus, while this rough desert-soil  
I tread, be thou my guide and stay ;  
Nerve me for conflict and and for toil,  
Uphold me on my stranger-way.

Jesus, in heaviness and fear,  
'Mid cloud, and shade, and gloom I stray ;  
For earth's last night is drawing near —  
Oh cheer me on my stranger-way.

Jesus, in solitude and grief,  
When sun and stars withhold their ray,  
Make haste, make haste to my relief —  
Oh light me on my stranger-way.

Jesus, in weakness of this flesh,  
When Satan grasps me for his prey ;  
Oh give me victory afresh,  
And speed me on my stranger-way.

Jesus, my righteousness and strength,  
My more than life, my more than day ;  
Bring, bring deliverance at length —  
Oh come and end my stranger-way,"



## XI.

### THE SPIRITUAL MIND.

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SPIRITUAL mind enjoys life and peace.

It lives as seeing always the invisible God.

The tendency of a carnal mind is to gross materialism. It seeks to live far away from God. Separates between him and his gifts, and even between him and his works. Hence men of carnal minds, instead of meeting God and holding communion with him in nature and Providence, love to speak of God as having passed over everything to fixed and unchangeable laws. They speak as if God were no longer absolute, but had become the slave of certain laws, which so control all things that it is vain to expect God's personal ministry in  
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our every-day wants and wishes. They thus make prayer a vain thing, and mock at the idea of a special providence in the affairs of men. Such would like to exclude God from his own universe, but the Lord reigns, and therefore the righteous rejoice.

The Bible tells us that God's government over the world is minute and personal. God himself rules, not mere agents and laws. A sparrow falling by the skill of a hunter, might seem a very chance event, but our Lord tells us that even there the Divine direction is at work. God makes use of laws and agents, but he is always through them, in them, and above them, by his own personal presence.

This truth lies at the very foundation of all religious worship. To feel that God is about my paths, and about my bed, and looking upon, and taking an interest in all my ways brings God very near. It leads to an acknowledgment of him in all that we do. It inspires the soul with a wish to carry all our wants, our cares and our troubles to him as our best friend. It strengthens our faith, and

kindles our love into a mighty flame. It enables us to talk with God face to face as Moses did of old. We feel that he is at work, not merely among the stars, but upon our hearts. That he is not only attending to the revolution of mighty worlds, but also to the smallest matter that concerns our well being. In short, that God is here now, never absent from us for a moment, and a very present help in time of trouble.

How noble and glorious is a life thus lived in God! And there are multitudes of such lives. In obscurity and retirement, beneath the shadow of the humblest dwelling, utterly unknown to fame and not caring to be known, they find their all in God. In poverty, in adversity, amid the surging billows of outward troubles, their calm trust in God never wavers. Their hearts beat with a quicker throb at the mention of the name of Jesus, and rather than desert his cause they would face death in its worst forms. Their warm love to souls is never chilled by the cold atmosphere of selfishness that surrounds them; but spite of injury and in-

sult, of misconception and scorn, can return good for evil, and pray for those who despitefully use them.

The possession of a spiritual mind is one of the highest proofs of a renewed heart. A man of a poetic mind, and of a cultivated taste may take great delight in God's works, and yet be far from God himself. The rush of the mighty waterfall, the lofty overhanging cliff, the sunlit cloud, and the star-bespangled heavens may thrill him with joy, and yet God not be in his thoughts. He may utter many sentimental expressions about the greatness and goodness of God, and yet sin be loved as well as ever, and holiness hated as much as ever.

But if asked how may we know when the sanctifying grace of God is operating in the heart, we could not point to a better evidence than the mind being fixed on heavenly things. Where the treasure is there will the heart be also. God is the treasury of the real Christian, and heaven is the place where he is most perfectly enjoyed, and the affections set upon heaven, is proof of a truly spirit-

ual mind. Knowledge the most extensive, learning the most profound, and gifts the most remarkable, a hand ever liberal, and a tongue ever valuable in the cause of Christ may all fail to prove that the heart is right with God, but a heart ever soaring heavenward is an evidence that none can doubt.

Take a Christian of the very weakest attainments; one whose ignorance exposes him to the contempt of the learned; one whose intellect may be so weak that he can with difficulty follow a logical argument to its close; and whose stammering tongue refuses to give expression to the warmer emotions of the heart; yet his affections repose in God. He has chosen him as his portion, and his longing for holiness finds expression in the cry "Oh that I had the wings of a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest!" He looks upon that day as lost in which he has not had a refreshing view of the love of Jesus, and of his heavenly home.

What are wealth and fame and all that ambition craves, compared to the possession of such a state of mind as this? How refreshing and profitable is the

conversation of such a Christian. He comes from converse with God, fragrant with the breath of heaven. He pours out spiritual treasures. His words, his looks, his tones, all tell us that he has been drinking of the river of life, and feasting on angels' food. If he is thought to be greatly honored who lives in earthly courts, in daily converse with earthly Kings, how much more is he honored who is the favorite of the King of Kings. As the greatest mountains are those whose summits reach nearest heaven, so he is the greatest man in God's sight, who is found oftenest bathing his soul in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

We will be happy just in proportion as we have this spiritual mind. The Bible everywhere speaks of the life of true Christians as being a happy one. "Joy unspeakable and full of glory," "Peace that passeth all understanding," are the terms in which it is spoken of.

The early Christians, amid the heaviest trials, had a joy which was the very symbol of heaven

itself. They stood steadfastly bearing their testimony for the truth, through long years of suffering, their faith growing stronger and grander till their last hour on earth; their examples shining down upon us through all the thick darkness of intervening ages. The reason is that they lived constantly as seeing Him who is invisible. As the most cold and frozen countries are those that are the farthest from the direct rays of the sun, so the reason why we have so many cold professors of the truth now is that they live so far from God.

If we would only collect our thoughts that are often taken up with vanities; if we would only put the curb of restraint upon our wandering imaginations, and bend all our energies to the study of spiritual things, we might live, as it were, in the very suburbs of heaven.

David says, "The light of God's countenance more gladdens the heart than corn and wine," and therefore he who lives most in the radiance of that countenance will be the most happy.

Many speak as if their want of peace and joy was

their misfortune, rather than their sin. But this is a mistake. The gospel is good news, glad tidings for all people; and if we are not made happy by it, it must be because we have not believed it; and unbelief is, in God's sight, a sin worthy of eternal condemnation. God does not communicate joy to the soul without the exercise of its powers, any more than he gives us food for our bodies without exercise. If a man were to refuse to plow, and sow, and work, he would be unreasonable to expect a crop, so it is in the exercise of faith that joy comes to the soul. Lift your thoughts on high. Fix your affections on heaven. The thought of a Saviour's love has made thousands welcome the flames of martyrdom, and made them take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, that they might obtain an enduring inheritance; and it can give like blessedness.

A spiritual mind is the best preservative against temptations to sin. Satan's harvest time is when the Christian's mind is in a carnal, worldly frame. Then he employs all his allurements, and shoots forth his fiery darts, as it was when David was upon



his house-top, indolently wasting time and neglecting duty, that the temptation was presented to his mind that produced such fearful results; so every Christian knows that a heavenly frame of mind makes sin appear to them exceedingly sinful. They can then say to every suggestion of the enemy, "Get thee behind me Satan." A man employed in mighty affairs, upon which life and death depend, has no inclination to turn aside to the trifling amusements of children, and so with those who are absorbed with the momentous concerns of eternity.

Besides, such a man has a deeper view of the evil of sin than others. He has such an overwhelming view of its God's dishonoring nature; such a conception of the vanity of the world, and such an humbling sight of his own natural depravity, that temptations are robbed of their power over him. "In vain," says Solomon, "is the snare spread in the sight of the bird;" and so it is nearly in vain for Satan to spread his net when the soul sees its danger. Hence he is said to darken the

mind, and to blind the eyes of his victims, and so take them captive at his will. It is when men have allowed the enemy to thus blind them, that they make such foolish bargains, as to prefer their own will to Christ's, sin to holiness, and hell to heaven.

And if we were employed in feeding on the heavenly manna, and tasting the delights of heavenly things, sin would be so bitter to our taste that we would turn away from it with unutterable loathing. Had Satan come to tempt Peter, to deny his Master when he was on the mount of Transfiguration, he would have tempted him in vain; but when he found him out of the path of duty in worldly company, he succeeded. The children of Israel in the valley, ate, and drank, and rose up to dance before their idol; but Moses, who had just come down from conversing with God, had no such wish, but on the contrary, his very soul loathed their unholy proceedings. So, my reader, if you wish to resist the devil, so that he may flee from you, "set your affections on things above."

The cultivation of a spiritual mind, gives new life and vigor to every duty.

It is high time that we were heartily ashamed of our cold-heartedness in Christ's service. We profess to believe the most sublime truths, and yet we talk of them often with frozen lips and cold hearts. We profess to pray, and sing the praises of God, often with an apathy that dwindles down into heartless forms. Now how are we to get out of this cold, and heartless state? What will give new power to our prayers, and make our songs like those of the angels above? I answer, cultivating a mind that lives in God's own immediate presence. Heavenly-minded Christians are lively, and joyful Christians. It is only when we look at heavenly things from a great distance, and through the thick clouds of worldly-mindedness, that we become dull and dead; but when we live in the presence of the living God, what a power and dignity there is about us. If such a man be a minister, how heavenly and spiritual are his sermons. If a private member of the church, his prayers, his con-

versation, his exhortations are like the distant echoes, of the transporting strains that fill the courts of heaven.

After a man has his affections set on heaven, he soon begins to emit so many of heaven's rays, that people say, "Surely that man has been with God on the holy mount." For want of such heavenly-mindedness, many a professor is like a lamp not lighted, and their duties like sacrifices without fire. But when we get a live coal from off the heavenly altar, how freely do our sacrifices burn; and when we light our lamps at the flame of God's love, they shed a brilliant radiance all around. Oh, let us lift our hearts to heavenly things! Let us gaze with the eye of faith upon the living Saviour, behold his beauty, his glory, his excellency, and soon the fire of Divine love will consume the dross in our hearts, and the fire thus kindled will not be strange fire. Zeal thus excited, will be lasting zeal. While some, like Baäl's priests, will be ready to cut themselves because their sacrifices will not burn;

the truly spiritually-minded man, will ascend in a chariot of devotion to heaven.

Such a Christian is profitable to all around him. He is a salt to the earth, a light in the midst of surrounding darkness.

While the worldly man will talk of nothing but the world, while the scholar will talk of his learning, and the self-righteous man of his good deeds, he talks of the things that are eternal. And his words pierce and melt and often transform the heart of them that hear them. His conversation is like the box of precious ointment that the woman poured upon the head of Christ; it fills the whole house with a heavenly odor. Go to that man's house, and sit at his table, and your soul is feasted with the heavenly manna. Travel with him by the way, and he will try to direct and quicken you on your journey to heaven. He will try to make you rich in faith, and an heir of eternal glory. If you wrong such a man he can forgive you as he himself has been forgiven. If men invoke curses on his head, he prays for blessings on them. This is the

man of the right stamp, and the world is the better of them. Like Caleb and Joshua, he is gone to the heavenly country, and brought in a bunch of the heavenly fruit to whet our appetite for more. "Happy is the people where God is thus the Lord."

A spiritual mind is the best support amid the sorrows and the afflictions of life. Many are the modes adopted for meeting those trials to which all are subjected. Some struggle under them, and render themselves, and all around them miserable, by pouring forth their unavailing complaints. Others sit down with a stoical indifference, submitting to the lashes of a something they call Fate. Others leaning upon a false philosophy, try to find comfort for themselves in the utterance of the poor truism that, seeing we can't help it we must just submit. Of all such comforts it may be said, as of Job's friends, "Miserable comforters are you all."

When trouble comes to the spiritual-minded man, he has far other comforts. When distress, and sufferings rob him of all outward comfort,

Jesus comes into his soul and says, "Peace be unto you." When Paul and Silas were thrust into the inner prison, their bodies plowed by scourges, and their feet made fast in the stocks, their unfettered souls soared to heaven in a song of praise. None could put a lock and key upon their affections. So the martyrs have often enjoyed that peace in the midst of the flames, which their persecutors could not find on a bed of down.

Thus it was that Abraham went out, not knowing whither he went, but looking for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. It was thus that Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, because he has respect to the recompense of reward. It was thus that others were tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might attain a better resurrection.

When we think for a moment of the glorious privileges that are the Christian's portion, not a murmuring word should ever proceed from our lips. Every moment under the special care of that

loving Father, for whose power nothing is too vast, and for whose inspection nothing is too minute. Enabled by the eye of faith to look full on his brightness, and to commune with him face to face. The treasures of God's precious promises pouring their untold riches into his soul, and affording him an unperishable source of delight. His name recorded in the Lamb's book of Life, his future home a house not made with hands, and a crown of glory awaiting his coming, why should he not be a happy man? His Saviour has ransomed him by sufferings of no common kind; and amid the darkened sun declared his salvation a finished work. It is evident that a man who lives, and walks under the influence of such truths as these has a cordial for affliction, and a balm for sorrow which others can not possibly possess.

What, although a whole shower of afflictions may fall upon him, like the stones upon the head of Stephen, if like him he can see, from the opening heavens, the sympathizing eye of his Saviour fixed upon him. What, although he may be doomed to




solitude, like John in Patma, if like him he can only hear the voice of his Lord speaking comfort and cheer. What, although, like the three Hebrews, he may be put into the fiery furnace of affliction, if like them the son of man walks with him in the fiery trial. What, though, like Paul, he may have a thorn in the flesh, if, like him, he can only hear his Lord say, "Thy grace is sufficient for you." What, though, like Peter, Satan may desire to have him, that he might sift him like wheat, if, like him, he has the Lord's assurance, "I have prayed for you that your faith fail not."



## XII.

### HINDRANCES TO SPIRITUAL MINDEDNESS.

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 F WE would possess a spiritual mind, we must avoid living in the indulgence of any known sin. Sin is the cause of all the misery that exists in our world. It wrings the heart with anguish from the cradle to the grave, and makes every part of our world echo the groans of suffering humanity. It has introduced death, and made of our world a huge sepulchre. It is still emptying earth and peopling perdition. It is our only enemy ; for it does that for us which nothing else can, makes us hideous in the sight of God.

A man may be ever so poor on earth and yet be

the favorite of God. Like Lazarus, and Job, he may be covered with loathsome disease, and yet be fair and lovely in God's sight; but sin is the abominable thing that the Lord hates, 'Tis more poisonous than the gall of asps, though men often roll it as a sweet morsel under their tongues.

Men may think lightly of it and call it a trifle, but can that be a trifling thing which causes the God of love to curse the work of his own hands, and to banish those for whom he has done so much, from his presence forever.

Now if such be the nature of sin, there can be no heavenly delights in the heart where it is willingly indulged. If a man is daily doing violence to his conscience, and sinning against the clearest light. If he is in a great measure the slave of his appetite and passions, and refuses to put the curb of restraint upon them; if he is in haste to be rich and not at all scrupulous about the means by which this is to be attained; in short, if he does not seek to cultivate a conscience that shrinks from the least approach of iniquity, thick clouds of dark-

ness will come between him and God. When he attempts to soar heavenward, he will be like a weak bird that would try to follow the lofty flight of the eagle, but which the tempest beats back panting and nearly lifeless to the earth. He may try to excite his mind, and blow upon his little spark of love, hoping to kindle a flame, but his sin, like water poured upon it, will speedily put it out.

Count Godomar, when near the eternal world, said that he feared nothing in the world more than sin; and whatever liberties he had formerly taken, he would rather now submit to be torn to pieces by wild beasts, than knowingly or willingly commit any sin against God.

The last words of Archbishop Usher were, "Lord, forgive my sins, especially my sins of omission."

If a professed Christian would rather gossip at home than go to a prayer meeting; if he had rather run to hear fifty sermons than practice one; if he finds it pleasanter to utter harsh criticisms upon his minister than to pray for his success; if he

had rather talk about a thousand sins in his neighbors than mortify one in himself; if he can shrink from any duty because it is unpopular; and will bring upon him the world's sneers; in short, if he acts as if he thought that Christ was holy to save him from being so, he cannot have a heavenly mind. He may seem to pray with the earnestness of an Elijah, talk with the feeling of a David, and weep like a Jeremiah, but if he does not strive against sin, as those men did, and act out his convictions of right as they were accustomed to do, there is much reason to fear that he is only a self-deceiver. Sin indulged will clip the wing of the strongest faith, and cut the sinews of the warmest zeal. God's people are to be "a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

If we would cultivate a spiritual mind, we must shun all covetousness. The word of God is most explicit on this point, assuring us that where the love of the world is, the love of the Father can not dwell. When the worldly-minded man ought to be rejoicing in God, he is rejoicing in the in-

crease of his earthly riches ; and when he ought to be mourning over the low state of Zion and over perishing souls, he is weeping over his earthly losses. Could such a professor see his conduct in the light of a burning world, and in the light of eternity, how would he be startled at the extent of his own folly. How great is the madness of those who rush into innumerable cares, in their haste to be rich, and after they have involved themselves in more employments than they can possibly manage, wonder that they do not make more progress heavenward. You might as well call upon a rock, or a mountain to fly heavenward, as to expect that your soul can hold daily communion with God, while it groans under such a load.

The curse of God seems to have rested upon covetousness, from the first of time, and no wonder. What keeps the hungry from being fed? What keeps the naked from being clothed, and the ignorant from being instructed? What keeps the word of God from being known over the wide earth, and the world from being converted? There is but one

answer, it is covetousness. It is a bare-faced refusal to do what God wants to be done with his own. It is usurping God's right, a crime as bad as usurping his throne. It was this sin that ruined the first pair, for they coveted to be as gods. It found a lodgement in the heart of Cain, who coveted Abel's blessing. It was the sin that ruined Lot's family, transforming his wife into a pillar of salt. It caused Achan to be stoned to death, and made Gahazi leprous till his death. It brought ruin on Judas, death on Annanias, and caused Demas to forsake the truth. In short, it was this sin that may be said to have made hell itself, for it was made for devils who coveted the throne of God.

Mr. Cecil had a rich hearer, who, when a young man, had solicited his advice, and who had not for some time had an interview with him. Mr. Cecil called on him one day, and said, "I understand you are very dangerously situated." The young man replied, "I am not aware of it." Mr. Cecil said, "I thought it was probable you were not; and

therefore I have called on you. I hear you are getting rich; take care, for it is the road by which the devil leads thousands to destruction."

A merchant in one of the towns of the State of New York, says Mr. Finney, was paying a large part of his minister's salary. One of the members of the church was relating the fact to a minister from abroad, and speaking of the *sacrifice* which this merchant was making. At this moment the merchant came in. "Brother," said the minister, "you are a merchant. I suppose you employ a clerk to sell goods, and schoolmasters to teach your children. You order your clerk to pay the schoolmaster, out of the store, such an amount, for his services in teaching. Now, suppose that your clerk should give out that *he* had to pay the schoolmaster his salary, and should speak of the sacrifices he was making to do it, what would you say to this?" "Why," said the merchant, "I should say it was ridiculous." "Well," said the minister, "God employs you to sell goods as his clerk, and your minister he employs to teach your children,



and requires you to pay his salary out of the income of the store. How do you call this *your* sacrifice, and say that you are making a great sacrifice to pay this minister's salary? No; you are just as much bound to sell for God, as he is to preach for God. You have no more right to sell goods for the purpose of laying up money, than he has to preach the Gospel for the same purpose. You are bound to be just as pious, and to aim as *singly* at the glory of God, in selling goods, as he is in preaching the gospel. And thus you are as absolutely to give up your whole time to the service of God, as he does. You and your family may live fully out of the avails of this store, and so may the minister and his family, just as lawfully. If you sell goods from these motives, selling goods is just as much serving God as preaching, and a man who sells goods upon these principles, and acts in conformity to them, is just as pious, just as much in the service of God, as he is who preaches the Gospel. Every man is bound to serve God *in his calling*, the minister by teaching, the merchant by

selling goods, the farmer by tilling his fields, and the lawyer and physician by plying the duties of their profession."

A minister says, a young man, who had nothing except what he earned by his labor, came to me, bringing a donation of eight dollars for the Bible Society. "He said it was the Lord's, and he had no right to withhold in it." He added, "When I gave myself to God, I also gave him all I had, and all I ever should have, and now the Lord is not dependant upon me. If I do not give it, he can easily remove me, and put it into the hands of some one who will give it."

If we would have a spiritual mind, we must avoid a proud and lofty spirit. There is no disposition which appears more out of place in poor puny man, than pride and self conceit; and yet how generally, are these traits of character exhibited. Remembering that man is a fallen creature, depraved and guilty; that he has derived his origin from the dust, and is fast hastening to the grave, where worms will devour him, what has he to be

proud of? He is every moment dependant upon God, for every pulse that beats, every breath he draws, and every thing that makes life desirable. He is even dependent upon the meanest and most despised of God's creatures for many of his comforts, and even necessities. Every thing that he calls his own, he holds by the most precarious tenure. His friends may be snatched from him in a moment, his riches may make themselves wings and fly away, and his health may be blasted by infection in any passing breeze. He is liable to hunger and thirst, cold and heat, poverty and disgrace, sorrow and pain, through all the brief span of his stay upon earth. Even his mind, his noble, intellectual part, that part which can rise to heaven and wander through eternity, is liable to be taken from him at any moment, leaving him a drivelling imbecile. It is said that the celebrated poet, Southey, for some years before his death, had so lost his intellectual powers that he did not know his own name, and when looking at his own books, said, "Southey! who is he?" Tourney, after he had

excelled all Oxford in learning, and become very eminent among the literary men of Paris, was so puffed up with pride as to hold Aristotle superior to Moses and Christ, and yet but equal to himself. In his latter days, he became so idiotic as not to know one letter in a book, or to remember one thing he had ever learned. And yet, poor mortals will dare to be proud; some glory in their wealth, some in empty titles, some in beauty and high birth, and others in empty fame. Oh! surely, pride must stand as a mighty foe between God and the soul.

A young lady, eighteen years of age, in the city of New York, was brought up by her parents in all the gayeties and follies of youth; by them encouraged to ornament her person, and engage in every gay amusement. When she was taken ill, three physicians were sent for immediately, who pronounced her to be near her dying hour. No sooner was their opinion made known to her, than she requested, as a favor, that all her gay companions might be collected with haste. They were soon

around her bed, when she told them she was going to die—described the awful manner in which they had spent their precious time, and exhorted them all to repentance before it was too late, in a very affecting manner. She then, turning to her father and mother, addressed to them, in the presence of her acquaintances, these heart-rending words: “You have been the unhappy instruments of my being; you fostered me in pride, and led me in the paths of sin; you never once warned me of my danger, and now it is too late. In a few hours you will have to cover me with earth; but remember while you are casting earth upon my body, my soul will be in hell, and yourselves the cause of my misery!” She soon after expired.

Yes, my reader, if you would enjoy real communion with God, you must beware of pride. If pride drove the first pair from an earthly paradise, rest assured that if indulged it will drive you from a heavenly one. God, we are told, knoweth the proud afar off. If you are puffed up in your own conceit, greatly elated when men praise you, and

correspondingly depressed when they censure; if you love the company of those best who flatter you, and shun those friends who are ready to tell you your faults; if you are ready to take offense on account of some imaginary slight, and refuse to make confession of your faults when you do wrong; if you hate plain dealing and are always ready to assert your own faultlessness; then it is to be feared that there is much pride lurking in your heart. So long as a man worships himself, he can not worship God. He may make use of very humble expressions, and describe himself as a great sinner, but this may only be the proud spirit seeking applause for its seeming humility.

If we would enjoy spiritual-mindedness we must often be employed in conversation about heavenly things. There is a great deal of religious conversation, as it is called, which is little better than religious gossip. To talk of ministers and their sermons, of missionaries and their labors, of churches and their practices, too often forms the staple of what is called religious conversation.

Now it is right that a man should be well-informed in regard to the movements in the religious world, but it is not right that our conversation should be occupied with the mere externals of religion, to the exclusion of those vital themes which cause the heart to burn, and glow, as we speak of them. The two disciples in that delightful walk which they had with Jesus, after his resurrection, said, "How did our hearts burn within us," as they listened to his spiritual conversation. John Bunyan was converted by overhearing the conversation of two humble women talking about the love of Christ to them; and Christians who neglect to speak of divine things, lose many precious opportunities of usefulness. A Christian minister, some years ago, on returning from preaching in a neighboring village, was asked by an individual to direct him to a certain place. His request was attended to, and when the stranger was thanking him for his kindness, the minister replied, "Take care, my friend, that you are in the right way at last." These words appeared long to sound in the man's ears, and what

could the gentlemen mean by them? was an inquiry often presented to his mind, and which at length led to the salvation of his soul. Some years had passed away, with all their attendant cares, joys, and sorrows, when the minister was solicited to preach at Ludlow Salop. After the service, he was requested to visit a member of the church who was in a dying condition. As soon as he came near, the dying man fixed his eyes on the countenance of the minister, and with a peculiarly significant look, and emphatic voice, said, "Sir, I know you! I know you!" "Know me!" replied the minister, "how can that be? for I am a stranger here." "I know you, sir," again he replied. "Do you not remember," said he, "some years ago, a person asking you the way to such a place, and your returning with him, putting him in the right path, and when you were parting, saying to him, 'My friend, take care that you are in the right way at last?' " "No, I do not," replied the minister; for it had completely escaped his memory. "Yes, you did, sir," rejoined the dying man, "I have not forgotten it, nor ever



shall forget it. 'The right way at last;' Oh, sir, am I in that way now? I can not live long, I feel that I am dying; tell me, Oh, tell me, if I am in the right way."

The minister questioned him as to his faith in Christ, and on other important points, to which the dying man returned suitable and satisfactory answers. After which the minister affectionately and earnestly recommended him in prayer to God, and left him. In a few days his mortal career was ended.

Nothing promotes spiritual-mindedness so much as conversing with God in prayer and praise. In everything we are invited to make our requests known unto Him, and to mingle thanksgiving with our supplications. Singing the praises of God is to form a large part of the employment of heaven. Very persistent efforts have been made in the present day to discourage men from prayer, on scientific principles, but this is just another form of the old opposition of the carnal heart to intercourse with God. The natural heart hates anything that


brings a personal God near it. Still every Christian knows, from the best of all evidences, his own experience, that God is the hearer of prayer. The world is full of evidences of it, however sinners may shut their eyes, and close their ears against them. Let us cease not to call upon God while he is near, and in everything acknowledge him that he may direct our steps.



### XIII.

## THE CHRISTIAN RACE.

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HE Christian's progress through life is often compared to running a race. This was a favorite figure of Paul's when speaking to young converts. He says, "Wherefore, seeing we are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that does most easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us." And in speaking to others that were making bad work in their Christian race, he said, "Ye did run well; what hath hindered you?" These expressions have reference to the Olympic games, so much renowned among the Grecians, and instituted in (192)

honor of their gods and heroes. These games were peculiarly prized by the populace, and at the appointed time for their celebration great multitudes assembled from all parts of Greece. The rich and the poor, the freeman and the slave, the stripling and the sire, all pressed forward to crowd the large ampitheatre, built for the accommodation of the spectators. There several persons would enter the list, and after laying aside every weight or every part of superfluous clothing, that might entangle them in their race, they started, amid the shouts of the eager crowd, and the victor received a prize from the hand of the Judge, amid the applause of assembled thousands.

Now, this figure implies that the Christian life is a scene of conflict. When a man among the Grecians entered the list to run for the prize, he had to lay aside all ideas of ease and self-indulgence, and prepare himself for a severe conflict. To listen to the voice of indolence and loiter by the way would cover him with deepest disgrace, so the Christian must not expect to be "wafted to the skies on

downy beds of ease." When by divine grace he yields himself up to his Saviour, he professes to begin a conflict with sin, the world, and the devil, which is never to terminate till death is swallowed up in victory. It is no uncommon thing for the young convert to err here. When the truth, as it is in Jesus, in its full-orbed grandeur, arises upon his mind; when the chains of his bondage are snapped asunder by him who proclaims liberty to the captives; when the burden of his guilt is removed, and the peace of God pervades his soul; when he begins to get a glimpse of his high privileges, and lofty vocation, he experiences so much of the joy of heaven upon earth, that he is apt to think that it shall always be thus with him, and that no more shall trouble lay its distracting hand upon his soul. But soon this dream of security comes to an end. His spiritual horizon becomes overcast with dark and threatening clouds. The enemy of his soul collects all his forces and pours upon him his hellish darts. The world shows him its darkest scowl of indignation and contempt; his

own heart, tormented with unbelief, plunges as if it would break the mighty chain of love that binds him to the throne of God, and he is ready to say, "I shall one day perish by the hand of mine enemy."

When men came to the Lord Jesus in the days of his flesh, he told them that it was through much tribulation that they must enter the kingdom. The Christian is a soldier in Immanuel's army, and he must fight manfully the battles of the Lord. The trumpet of the Captain of Salvation calls him to arms, but it is to a bloodless conflict he is called; a conflict with spiritual wickedness in high places. His weapons are to be the weapons of light, wielded in the cause of God and humanity. There waves over his head the banner of salvation, a banner dipped in the blood that ransomed the world, and upon which are inscribed the words, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of glory." His enemies are numerous, powerful and insidious. Onward is to be his watchword, and he is never to sound a retreat, 'till victory proclaims

his triumph, and his last enemy lies vanquished on the field.

The Grecian races to which the Apostle refers, were run in a prescribed course, and so must the Christian race. One running in these games might think it a matter of small moment whether he ran in the prescribed course or not, and might choose what he regarded as a better course than the one marked out by the Judges. He would find, however, that this would not do, but that he must submit to the laws that governed the race. In like manner we are to run the Christian race, as God bids us, and not as our own prejudices or feeling would dictate. The prejudices engendered by an erroneous religious training; the opinions of men, however high their standing and eminent their piety; the gust of pious impulse, and the flow of enthusiastic religious feeling; these are not to be our standard in running the race. No, it is the "race *set* before us," set and prescribed by God himself. In his holy word, he has written his word in language so simple and plain, that "he that runneth may read."

We are like strangers wandering through an unknown country, a country full of dangers, pits and precipices, and the Bible is our guide to lead us safely to our Father's home.

We are like mariners upon the stormy ocean of life, and God has given us the Bible as a chart, that by giving heed to it we may avoid the hidden rocks upon which thousands have perished, and arrive at last at the haven of eternal security and repose. The way to heaven is made plain in this holy book, and it is at the peril of our souls that we take any other way.

No doubt there are many devoted Christians living in the neglect of some important duty, because they are ignorant of their Master's will in regard to it; and who, were the truth on that point brought home to their convictions, would show the sincerity of their faith and love by a prompt and ready obedience. Still it is not to be denied that there are many who are trifling with some of the plainest truths of the Bible, because they are contrary to their interests, their passions, and their



preconceived notions. It is melancholy to think of the influence which prejudice will exert upon the human mind, and the errors into which it will lead us, both in theory and practice. It will darken the understanding, bias our modes of reasoning, and lead us to adopt the most absurd conclusions. We have a striking instance of the power of prejudice, mingled with interest, in the account of Paul's labors at Ephesus. You see a tumultuous mob heaving convulsively under the power of maddening passion. It is the truth that has thus enraged them, and prejudice has shut their eyes and their ears, against further explanation. It is in vain that the servant of God attempts to reason with them; he might as well attempt to reason with a whirlwind. All that meets his eye is a sea of upturned faces, inflamed with deadly rage, while they keep shouting for two whole hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" Well, what if she is great. It surely would not deduct anything from her greatness to hear a little reasoning on the subject. But reasoning is always irksome and unpalatable to the

ear of prejudice. It has a shorter and more convenient way of settling controversies than by fair argument. To put the servants of God down by clamor and calumny; to stop free discussion by brute force and club law; to get up the cry of heresy against a man and make him the object of public scorn. These are the weapons with which it is the delight of prejudice to do its work. They are weapons forged in hell, not taken from the polished armory of heaven.

It is greatly to the influence of prejudice that we are to attribute the bitterness and uncharitableness manifested among professing Christians in the present day. Here is a man for example, who manifests, to some denomination of Christians, the most unaccountable antipathy. He may know nothing of the principles of that body except by report, and that generally the report of an enemy; yet he gets it fixed in his mind that they are absurd and unscriptural. If at any time a book or a pamphlet should fall in his way, in which the principles of that body are set forth, he will not read it, but

throws it aside with contempt. The arguments may be clear, logical and scriptural, but he heeds them not. My reader, cherish a dread of such a state of mind as this. Cultivate an ardent love of truth, come from what quarter it may. Bring everything to the touch-stone of Divine revelation. Search the Scriptures, like the noble Bereans, to see whether these things were so.

You will always find the Bible an inexhaustible source of comfort to your soul. It will be joy to you in the midst of sorrow; light in the midst of darkness; and life in the midst of death. Its truths prove a heavenly adaptation to all classes and conditions. As one has beautifully observed, "It is a land of light, where there are heights where the strongest may delight to climb; and yet where there are shady bowers where the feeblest may recline. It is an ocean of truth, in which there are depths which the profoundest can not fathom; and yet there are calm and unruffled inlets where a little child may bathe."

The Grecian races were witnessed by numerous

spectators, and so is the Christian race. 'Tis in reference to this that Paul says, "Seeing that we are encompassed about with such a cloud of witnesses."

We learn from the Scriptures that holy angels are interested spectators of our Christian course. The great teacher has told us that there is joy among those pure beings when a sinner is converted; and if they feel such an interest in the beginning of the race, they surely can not be indifferent to its progress. They rejoiced over man's creation, sung the advent of Immanuel, ministered to him in his terrible conflict, and take a loving interest in the welfare of each of his followers. They watch every step of the Christian's progress, with untiring interest, and when the spirit is liberated from the body and its day of probation ended, convey it to its everlasting home.

The world also is looking on to see how we do our duty. Our words, our looks, our actions, are all watched by the world, and our consistency or inconsistency is influencing sinners for heaven or hell.

A consistent Christian is a miniature display of what the Lord was when he dwelt among men. He is a living commentary upon the Bible, a walking sermon, a thousand times more potent than ever was thundered from the pulpit. A consistent life cannot be gainsayed or resisted. It is an argument for the truth of Christianity which the most obtuse mind can understand, and which the hardest heart can feel.

But the most solemn thought is that the eye of God is upon us during our Christian race. "Thou, God, seest me." How great and awful is that thought! God with us, God near us, at every moment of our lives. Yes, he is nigh at hand, and not afar off. He knows all our peculiar thoughts, and feelings; our strength and our weakness. He views us in the day of our rejoicing, and in the day of our sorrow; knows all our hopes and our fears; sees the planning of our minds; and the throbbing anxieties of our heart. The God-man from his exalted throne in the heavens, looks down upon us with a brother's eye, and amid the worst of the

conflict cheers us with the words, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of glory."

Those who ran in the Grecian races obtained a prize, and so will the Christian when his race is ended. They only received a fading crown of flowers, but the Christian is to receive a crown of glory. Before the brightness of that crown all the glory and honor will fade away as worthless things. As eternity surpasses time; as heaven transcends earth: so will be the glory which Christ will confer upon his people. When the struggles of mortality are over, when the conflict with inward corruptions is ended, then their supreme felicity shall begin. Escaped from the wreck of a dying body, with what exultation shall the soul enter that deathless world.

The book of Revelation abounds more than any other portion of the sacred volume, with pictures of our heavenly home. The raptures of the redeemed, their triumphant song of praise, their blissful employments, are all set forth in language grandly sublime. The foundations of the heavenly city are represented as garnished with all manner

of precious stones. Its wall of jasper, its buildings and streets of pure gold, its gates pearl, its watchmen angels. The throne of God and the Lamb in the midst of it, from beneath which gushes forth the river of life, clear as crystal. Its banks adorned with the trees of life. No tempest rages there. Groans and sighs are never heard. The iron rod of oppression is forever broken. Wars and contentions have come to a perpetual end. There devotion shall be without languor. There love shall be without any alloy, and doubt shall have forever ended in positive certainty. Oh, the delights of dwelling in the noon-tide splendor of God's perfections! Oh, the blessedness of seeing face to face the great Immanuel, our elder brother, and being forever with him, and forever like him!

Sometimes the people of God are favored with glimpses of this heavenly home before they leave the earthly tabernacle. A visitor said to a dying Christian, "You seem to enjoy foretastes of heaven." When he replied, "Oh, this is no longer a foretaste; this is heaven! I not only feel the

climate, but I breathe the fine ambrosial air of heaven, and soon shall enjoy the company!"

The Rev. Thomas Haleyburton when dying said, "The thing I rejoice in is this, that God is altogether free; and that in the Mediator is all the fullness of the God-head, and it will never run out. If there be such a glory in Christ's conduct toward me now, what will it be to see the Lamb in the midst of the throne!"

Mr. Cobb, of Boston, before his death said, "Within the few last days I have had some glorious news of heaven. It is indeed a glorious thing to die. I have been active and busy in the world. I have enjoyed it as much as any one. God has prospered me. I have everything to tie me here. I am happy in my family; I have property enough; but how small and mean does this world appear when we are on a sick bed! Nothing can equal my enjoyment in the near prospect of heaven. My hope in Christ is worth infinitely more than all other things."

An old Hottentot was visited by Mr. Reed, a



missionary, when he was dying. He said "I shall now go and see the other country, where I have never been, but which I long to see! I am weary of everything here! I commit too much sin here. I wish to be free from it; I cannot understand anything well here. The Lord has spoken much to me, though I cannot explain it



## XIV.

### CONSECRATION.

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ON A beautiful summer day you may have seen the dark clouds curtain the heavens with darkness, until all nature seemed to shudder under the threat of a coming tempest. Then the thunder-cloud is rifted by the blazing thunder-bolt, the teeming shower is discharged, the clouds pass away, and the sky is lovelier and the atmosphere more balmy and healthful than before.

So it is with the soul to whom God's salvation from sin has come. God says to him, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions," and there is joy and sunshine in his soul. The dark cloud of sin has rolled away from his mind,

and the love of the infinite Father falls upon his soul with celestial light. He can look up to heaven, down to hell, and all around him in the world, and give utterance to the bold challenge, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.'

The Gospel saves not merely from the punishment of sin, from hell and eternal woe, but from the power of sin. It does this to men of all classes and nations. It takes hold of the very worst—none too bad, none sunk too low, none wandered too far, but this salvation can reach and save him. It takes hold of the heart of the very vilest, and never leaves him 'till he is rejoicing in glory, and striking the strings of the golden harp to the praise of his blessed Redeemer.

And yet our Lord has told us that our life on earth is to be marked by struggle and trial. He told them that it was through much tribulation that they must enter the kingdom. There was no keeping hid the trials of a holy life. He told them that they might expect a steady antagonism to their

religion and their attempts to do good. This they did not fully realize, and they must have been greatly astonished when the storm of the world's scorn, and indignation, and malignity burst upon their heads. An eloquent writer brings this out very clearly in the following passage: "They were living to themselves: self, with its hopes, and promises, and dreams, still had hold of them; but he began to fulfill their prayers. They had asked for contrition, and He sent them sorrow; they had asked for purity, and He sent them thrilling anguish; they had asked to be meek, and He had broken their hearts; they had asked to be dead to the world, and He slew all their living hopes; they had asked to be made like unto Him, and he placed them in the furnace, sitting by 'as a refiner of silver' till they should reflect His image. They had asked to lay hold of His cross; and when he reached it to them, it lacerated their hands. They had asked they knew not what, nor how; but He had taken them at their word and granted them all their petitions. They were hardly willing to

follow on so far or to draw so nigh to Him. They had upon them an awe and fear, as Jacob at Bethel, or Eliphaz in the night visions, or as the apostles when they thought they had seen the spirit, and knew not that it was Jesus;—they could almost pray Him to depart from them, or to hide His awfulness. They found it easier to obey than to suffer—to do than to give up—to bear the cross than to hang upon it; but they cannot go back, for they have come too near the unseen cross, and its virtues have pierced too deeply within them. He is fulfilling to them His promise. ‘And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me:’ but now *their* turn has come at last, and that is all. Before, they had only *heard* of the mystery, but now they *feel* it. He has fastened on them His look of love, as He did on Mary and Peter, and they cannot choose but follow. Little by little, from time to time, by flitting gleams, the mystery of His cross shines out upon them. They behold him lifted up, and the glory which rays forth from the wounds of His holy passion; and as they gaze upon it, they

advance and are changed into His likeness, and His name shines out through them, for he dwells in them. They live alone with him above, in unspeakable fellowship; willing to lack what others own, and to be unlike all, so that they are only like Him. Such are they in all ages who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Had they chosen for themselves, or their friends chosen for them, they would have chosen otherwise. They would have been brighter here, but less glorious in his kingdom. They would have had Lot's portion, not Abraham's. If they had halted anywhere,—if He had taken off His hand and let them stray back—what would they not have lost? What forfeits in the morning of resurrection? But he stayed them up, even against themselves. Many a time their foot had well nigh slipped; but he in mercy held them up; now, even in this life, they know all He did was done well. It was good for them to suffer *here*, for they shall reign hereafter—to bear the cross below, for they shall wear the crown above; and that not their will, but His, was done on them."

We live in a time when the danger is greater to our souls than in the days of fiery persecution. When a form of religion is in a manner popular; when attendance upon public worship gives a certain respectability to a man; and when gain can be made of godliness; then allurements of a worldly kind prove themselves more dangerous to eternal interests than direct persecution. Persecution, with its loud blasphemies, with its hands red with blood, brought out the graces of God's spirit, in a race of glorious martyrs who stood steadfast and immovable for their principles, and the Gospel came out of the conflict triumphant.

But the world now comes with its polite and smooth speech, speaking favorably of many of the outward things of religion, but really sneering at all that constitutes its vital power. So many become enfeebled in their Christian life, get to have easy consciences, throw themselves upon the tide of fashion, and make shipwreck of their souls. We need more of the firmness of the old Puritan, who when told that he was too stern and precise about

some things in religion, said, "Sir, I serve a precise God." It was said of a good man that he seemed sometimes to make little things great, but that he never made great things little.

We need now consecration to God, as much, yea, more, than those who lived in the stormy ages. By consecration to Christ I do not mean a new conversion, as some have called it, nor a state of sinless perfection, as others have claimed. It is not a thing of sudden impulses, and emotions, developed in a moment of excitement. It is simply the soul trusting wholly in Jesus, washed from all its sins in his precious blood, and clinging with an undying grasp to his cross. It is giving yourselves up to Christ forever, as bought with a price, and feeling that we are no longer our own.

If ever there was a man entirely consecrated, it was Paul, and he expressed it in the words, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom I am crucified unto the world, and the world unto me." "I determined to know nothing among you but Christ and



him crucified." He expressed it in that wonderful prayer when he asked that he might be "filled with all the fullness of God." And this we get only in Christ, for in him dwells the fullness of the God-head.

To try to get up a consecration out of Christ, by resolutions and promises of our own, is like trying to build up a wall of sand, that runs down as fast as you cast it up; or trying to carry water in a leaking pitcher. An old writer says, "Wisdom out of Christ is damning folly; righteousness out of Christ is guilt and condemnation; and redemption out of Christ is bondage." The consecrated soul has given up his will to be governed by God's will. He seeks to be of one mind with God. He does not measure himself nor his doings by the world's standard, but by what the Lord has spoken. To be of a strong, steady purpose to glorify God by doing those things that are pleasing in his sight; such a Christian seeks to make the Lord Jesus his bright pattern and example in all things. To have the same tender love for souls which he had; the

same forgiving spirit to enemies; the same boldness and consistency in defending the right; the same willingness to help the suffering and the oppressed; the same prayerfulness and love for communion with heaven; in short to be as an old writer says, "A little Christ."

This was one great aim and purpose for which Christ came into the world. "He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves." He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and make us a peculiar people zealous of good works. He tells us that if we love him, we will keep his commandments. A holy life is the only evidence that we have a living and not a dead faith; and an evidence that the world cannot deny, of the reality of religion. A holy life is just a ripening for heaven, for heaven is a place where nothing unholy can enter. Indeed if it were possible for an unholy person to enter there, it would be no heaven to him. He would not be in a state to enjoy it. One reason that the true Christian longs to get to heaven is, that he will

be sinless there. I have met a beautiful illustration of this somewhere in my reading. It is as follows :

“ If a child had been born and spent all its life in the Mammoth Cave, how impossible it would be for him to comprehend the upper world ! Parents might tell him of its life, its light, its beauty, and its sounds of joy ; they might heap up the sands into mounds, and try to show him by stalactites how grass, flowers and trees grow out of the ground ; ’till at length, by laborious thinking, the child would fancy he had gained a true idea of the unknown land.”

And yet, though he longed to behold it, when it came that he was to go forth, it would be with regret for the familiar crystals and rock-hewn rooms, and the quiet that reigned therein. But when he came up, some May morning, with ten thousand birds singing in the trees, and the heavens bright and blue, and full of sunlight, and the winds blowing softly through the young leaves, all aglitter with dew, and the landscape stretching away green and

beautiful to the horizon, with what ruptures would he gaze about him, and see how poor were all the fancyings and interpretations which were made within the cave of the things which grew and lived without; and how he would wonder that he could have ever regretted to leave the silence and dreary darkness of his old abode!

So, when we emerge from this cave of earth into that land where spring growths are, and where is eternal summer, how shall we wonder that we could have clung so fondly to this dark and barren life!"

True happiness on earth is only to be found in God's favor; and that favor is only to be found at the cross. Christ is to us the manifested God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Christ is the means by which the great fountain of God's love is made accessible to us, so that we can drink and live. We are so constituted that we are restless and uneasy, and dissatisfied, till we find peace with God;

and it is for us, free as the air we breathe. We are a burden to ourselves, our own tormentors, till we come to him to get rest. When we come to Calvary, God reveals his loving presence to us, and the still small voice whispers of love. There we find a hiding place, not from Justice, for Justice was fully satisfied, but from our own guilty fears. There the soul finds God as its portion forever; and no other portion can satisfy.

Souls seek a portion in the world, but their groans of disappointment come back to our ears on every breeze. They seek it in money, in friends, in fame, in titles, in a constant whirl of gay amusements, and many in gross animal delights, but from them all comes the cry of dissatisfaction. And while they are devising new ways of finding bliss the great mower, Death, comes and cuts them away.

When we turn to God, through Christ, he is ever ready to pardon our sins, to pity our weakness, to strengthen our powers, and to glorify our immortal nature with the fulness of his love. We can turn

from all our sin, and frailty, and trouble, and broken vows, and baffled resolutions, to the strength of the eternal God. Trust in the Lord Jehovah, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. Nearer and nearer to him as the great centre of blessedness. Let your soul mount up on wings as eagles.

Let your consecration to your God be hearty and complete. Let the solemn words of the Bible draw and bind you. Ye are not your own. Ye are bought with a price, even with the blood of the Son of God. Not with corruptible things, silver and gold, were we redeemed, but with the precious blood of God in our nature. It is then absolutely dishonest to feel that anything we have is our own, and to be devoted to selfish purposes. What have we got that we have not received, and that too for the purpose of glorifying God. The noblest use to which anything can be put, is to use it in the service of the Giver of every good and perfect gift. This truth that great and good man, President Edwards felt deeply when he consecrated himself to God's service, in the following solemn words:

“I have this day solemnly renewed my covenant and self-dedication which I made when I was received into the communion with the church.

“I have been before God, and have given myself, all that I am—and have, to God, so that I am not in any respect my own; I can challenge no right in myself; I can challenge no right in this understanding, this will, these affections that are in me; neither have I any right to this body or any of its members; no right to this tongue, these hands, nor feet; no right to these senses, these eyes, these ears, this smell or taste. I have given myself clear away, and have not retained anything as my own. I have been to God this morning, and told Him that I gave myself wholly to Him; I have given every power to Him, so that for the future I will challenge no right in myself in any respect. I have expressly promised Him, and do now promise Almighty God, that by His Grace I will not. I have this morning told Him that I did take Him for my whole portion and felicity, looking on nothing else as any part of my happi-

ness, nor acting as if it were; and His law for the constant rule of my obedience; and would fight with all my might against the world, the flesh, and the devil, to the end of my life. That I did believe in Jesus Christ, and receive Him as a Prince and a Saviour, and would adhere to the faith and obedience of the Gospel, how hazardous and difficult soever the profession, and practices may be. That I did receive the blessed Spirit, as my teacher, sanctifier, and comforter, and cherish all His motions to enlighten, purify, conform, comfort and assist me. This I have done. And I pray God, for the sake of Christ, to look upon it as a self-dedication, and to receive me as entirely His own, and deal with me in all respects as such, whether he afflicts or prospers me, or whatever he pleases to do with me who am His.

“Now henceforth I am not to act in any respect as my own. I shall act as my own, if I ever make use of any of my powers to do anything that is not to the glory of God, and do not make the glorifying of Him my whole and entire business;



if I murmur in the least at afflictions; if I grieve at the prosperity of others; if I am in any way uncharitable; if I am angry because of injuries; if I revenge, if I do anything purely to please myself; or if I avoid anything for the sake of my ease; if I omit anything because it is a great self-denial; if I trust to myself; if I take any of the praise of any good that I do, or rather which God does by me; or if I am any way proud."

Our bodies are not our own. This is the lowest part of our nature, the part that sprang from the earth and goes back to it again. It is the habitation of the soul, during our earthly probation, and the agent by which the soul puts forth the efforts to do good. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, and the organization of our bodies shows forth the wisdom of our Creator in such a manner as to strike the thoughtful mind with awe.

But we are to employ our bodily powers for God. If we have physical strength, it should be used for his glory. It is a thing not to be proud of, but to be thankful for, and to be laid out in works of use-

fulness, and in helping to bear the infirmities of the weak. Our blessed Lord had a body like us, subject to the same infirmities, his powers liable to be tired, his heart liable to be distressed, and his feelings keen to feel reproach as we are. Yet it was in that body he did good—yea, went about continually doing good.

Let our feet be employed on errands of mercy, and our hands in works of benevolence. Our eyes are to seek out the needy, and the perishing; and our ears to hear the cry of the distressed, and drink in the promises of God. We are to be careful of our health, that we may work longer, and better for Christ. The vigor derived from our food, is to be given back to God in honest work, such as will be well pleasing in His sight. The body is not to be made an instrument of mere selfish indulgence, but an agent by which we shall glorify God, and benefit our fellow men on earth.

Our souls are not our own. God breathed into man and he became a living soul. That soul has the stamp of God's immortality upon it. It must

live as long as he lives. When the sun shall have shot forth its last ray, and all the hosts of the stars shall have been quenched in darkness, the soul shall still live in immortal youth. The possession of such a wonderful gift makes us start back with fright at ourselves. As has been said by some one, if we were assured that the butterfly that flutters in the summer breeze, or the bird that sings on the tree, had begun a life that could never end, with what interest would we look at them.

So every child we see, every human we meet, we know can never die—must live somewhere—in some condition forever. Christ who came from his throne, at the very summit of glory, to save souls; who wept over them when he saw them rushing on to ruin; and who died to save them; knew as no other could know, the worth of such a soul, and he says, “What is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and yet loose his own soul; or what shall he give in exchange for his soul?” That soul with its vast powers and capacities, its wonderful range of conception, its capability of enjoying or suffer-

ing, to be lost, is a greater calamity, than it would be for the whole material universe to be swept out of existence.

Now we have such a soul given to us, but it is not our own, in the sense that we can do what we please with it, and go unpunished. We have no right to damn such a soul. Every provision has been made for its purification and perfection in bliss. The Spirit of God offers to come and dwell in it, and guide it to heights of attainment, both here and hereafter, of which we now are not able to form a conception.

Let then all our powers, without reserve, be dedicated to God's service. Let our memories be stored with his thoughts and words. Let reason, judgment, conscience, imagination, emotions and feelings, all be consecrated to Him who laid down his life for us. This is but a reasonable service, and to hold back, is to rob God. It is truly melancholy to think how many noble intellects have been prostituted to the worst of purposes. Men of noble talents, who might have swept the harp-string

with a Milton's hand, have written works pandering to the vices of men. To put jests into the mouths of bar-room loafers against religion, and virtue ; to stimulate the depravity of youth, and to strengthen in the wrong the bad ways of tottering old age ; to throw the charms of eloquence, and the witcheries of genius around deadly errors that lead men down to destruction ; this is the bad eminence to which they have attained. What a fearful account must such render to the Judge of the whole earth.

Our time is not our own. Time is very closely allied to eternity. Every hour of time is laying up results for heaven or hell. Time lost can never be recalled. All the regrets, tears, and prayers of ages, could not bring back to us one misspent day. And yet men often speak of time as a burden hanging upon their hands, and exercise great ingenuity to devise means, as they say, "to kill time."

Could we only have spent one day with the Lord Jesus when he was upon earth, and have seen how he spent his time, what a rebuke it would have been

to our trifling. He went about continually doing good. From morning till night he was at his work of love, and his motto was, "I must work the work of Him that sent me, while it is called day." "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business."

Time is a sacred talent to be accounted for, and should be employed, not for our own personal gratification, but for the honor of the Great Master. And time thus employed is happy time. It leaves no sting behind in the memory, but is pleasant to reflect upon on a death-bed.

Our money is not our own. As a proof that God does not regard the money a man has as his own, he often takes it away from him in his Providence, and leaves him in poverty. Money is needed to spread abroad the Gospel, to circulate the Bible, to feed the hungry, and to nourish the sick. To accomplish these things money must be consecrated to God, by those who feel his vows upon them. We have no right to draw upon the funds of God to supply our lusts and pride, but only our necessities. Real good for time and eternity can be done

with it now. The cause of truth, and humanity is in straits for want of it. And in the great day of accounts, what will all the wealth in the world seem, in comparison to the salvation of one single soul. "I have nothing to spare," is often the plea of a sordid reluctance, but a very different estimate will be found in the light of a burning world. Then those who, by acts of self-denial, have sought to bless the world, will hear the Judge say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

But I need not enumerate farther. The principle is plain. We have nothing that we can really call our own. Nothing but our sins. The gifts that God has given us, were imparted not to promote self-indulgence, but for the common good of the world. And the great truth that we have bought with the blood of Jesus, leaves us under lasting obligation to spend, and be spent in his service.

"Thanks for the love that sent the Christ,

And for the Christ that came ;

Thanks for the love that sent the Christ  
To bear our death and shame.

"Thanks for the love that shed the blood,  
And for the blood once shed,  
That speaks of life for man laid down,  
The living for the dead.

'Thanks for the love that gave the Gift,  
Even God's eternal Son ;  
And in that love all other loves,  
All other gifts in one.

"Thanks for the love that gave the peace,  
And for the peace bestowed,  
The peace that heals the wounded heart,  
The very peace of God.

"Thanks for the love that gave the health,  
The strength, the joy, the love ;  
The soul's true health on earth below,  
Its truer health above.

"Thanks for the love that gave the hope,  
And for the hope revealed,  
The hope of endless light and bliss,  
By present pardon sealed.

"Thanks for the love that gave the Light,  
And for the Light that shone ;  
The Light of light, the Light of life,  
The soul's true Lamp alone."





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